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Prudence's Progress
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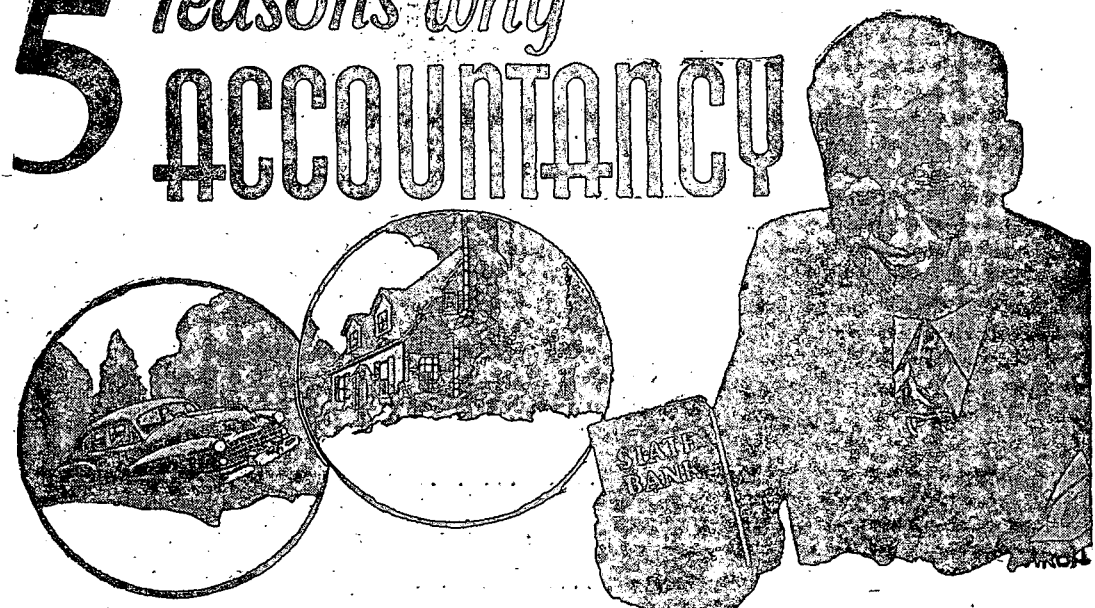

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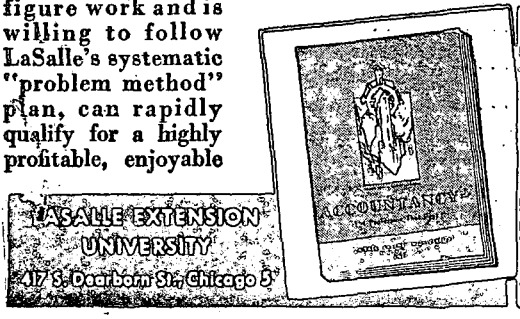

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Thrilling LOVE

VOL. LXXI, NO. 3 A THRILLING PUBLICATION February, 1950

THREE COMPLETE NOVELETS

PRUDENCE'S PROGRESS.....*Mona Farnsworth* 11
When a girl from a staid New England town inherits a night club, she's soon quite hep to smartness, sophistication and romance!

BACHELOR HUSBAND.....*Helen Ahern* 54
"When is a wife not a wife?" becomes the big problem in Christie Gaylord's heart as she finds herself enmeshed in a web of doubt

THE MOONLIGHT TRAIL.....*Ann Arden* 66
Kathie Walker turned on all her romantic magic to snare the rich yachtsman, but her emotions kept on playing tricks to betray her!

SHORT STORIES

YOUR HEART'S SHOWING.....*Shelby Steger* 31
Here's what happened to Sally when Dan Cupid upset all her plans

PRECIOUS TO HER HEART.....*Ruth Anderson* 37
Joan Norton knew all the answers—and really liked to be asked!

MOONMIST FOR MARY.....*Dorothy Daniels* 41
Vivacious Mary rivals languorous Linnette for a job—and a man

LOVE'S NO QUARTET.....*Shirley Manners* 85
It was up to Sherry Seaton to make her choice among four swains

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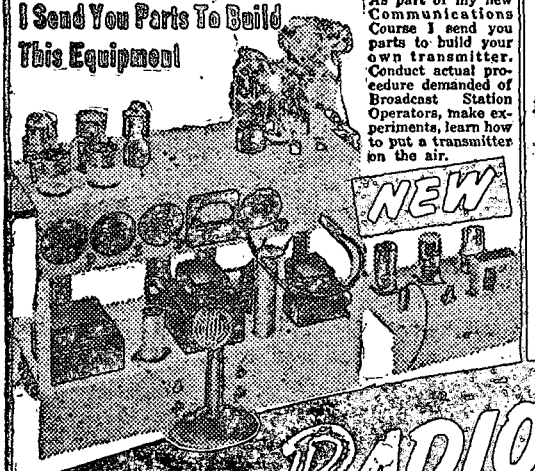

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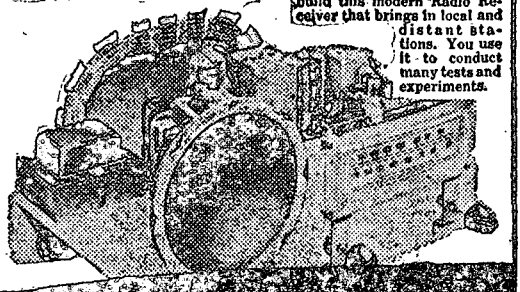

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YOU are a vibrant product of universal power. You began as an infant, expressing the life principles that are represented by the Sun. You are linked to these life-giving elements through the action of the Moon, which typifies your mother.

After a while your intellect began to function. This was related to the influences of Mercury.

When you became conscious of your emotions, you began to respond to the vibrations of Venus.

Courage is associated with the influences of Mars. Experience is activated by your relationship with the Earth. Wisdom is gained through the beneficent rays of Jupiter. Your sense of duty is fostered by the radiations of Saturn. The desire for progress is induced by the influences of Uranus. Sensations and impressions are stimulated by the elements of Neptune.

Awareness of yourself, and of the whole world as well as of the outermost regions of the Universe, is caused by your response to the actions of Pluto.

It is as if you are the center of a huge wheel, with spokes pointing in all directions. At the end of these spokes are the Sun, Moon, and Planets. As they revolve around you, they bring you happiness, success, love, fame, fortune, hope, and great expectations as well as the reverse cycles that result in stress, disappointment, and regret.

Astrology can interpret the universal influences, and also tell you about the various cycles in your life. Your personal horoscope, based on the aspects that prevailed at your birth, can reveal important factors about your past, present, and future. To consult any astrologer for inspiring and informative facts about yourself, or about someone whom you love, all that is needed are the correct day, month, and year of birth.

A Life of Service

FRANCINE A. K. writes: My invalid mother has made it necessary for me to live a life of service and seclusion. Consequently I am lonely, reticent, and anxious to find some of the happiness I have missed. Is it too late to look forward to the kind of marriage for which I have been waiting so long? I was born November 3, 1910.

What your horoscope r e v e a l s: Enduring happiness means a great deal to you because at your birth the Sun, Venus and Mercury formed a stellium in the Sign Scorpio which rules security. Delay in marriage is indicated by the opposition that is formed between this stellium and Saturn, symbol of restriction, in your solar Seventh House which rules personal and business affiliations.

Another reason for the deferment is revealed by Jupiter, symbol of affluence, in your solar Twelfth House which rules seclusion. This part of your horoscope is occupied by the Sign Libra which rules marriage.

Therefore, you might be hesitant about matrimony because of the feeling that you would have to contribute to the support of your husband.

At present Jupiter is in beneficent trine aspect with its original position in your horoscope. As a result of this favorable planetary cycle, you might meet a doctor, clergyman, or welfare worker who falls in love with you and who proposes marriage. After the wedding you are likely to realize that voluntary service, when accompanied by love,

(Continued on page 8)

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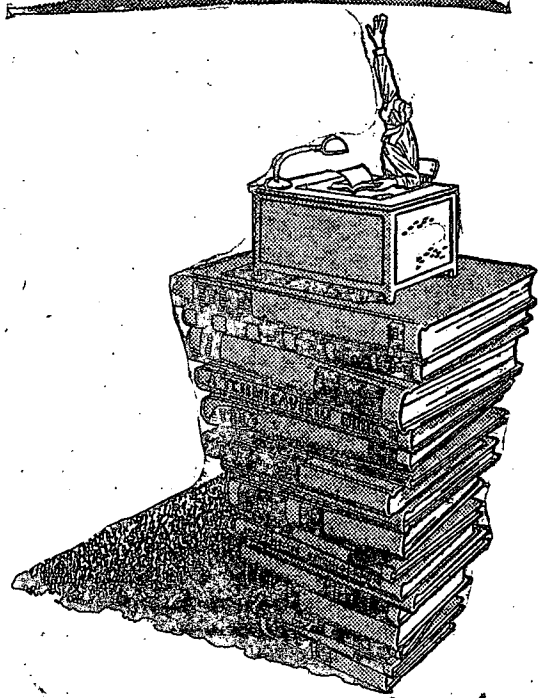

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WHAT YOUR STARS REVEAL

(Continued from page 6)

adds to the happiness and contentment of married life.

Due to Retire

MRS. ADA V. S. writes: In a few months my husband is due to retire from the Police Department on a small pension. The amount of this pension will not be enough to cover our living expenses. Should we invest in a tourist camp or motel, and try to run it so as to build up a larger income? My husband was born November 5, 1885. I was born January 12, 1897.

What your horoscopes reveal: Wait a while before you invest your savings in an ambitious business project. Right now transiting Saturn in the Sign Virgo conjoins your natal Jupiter, and the same Planet in your husband's horoscope. Since Jupiter typifies money, and Saturn is the symbol of limitations, a large outlay of cash can end in loss rather than in profit.

After January 1950, and continuing for almost three years thereafter, the Planet Uranus will be in favorable trine aspect with the natal Sun in your husband's birth chart. This aspect will be especially strong for business arrangements that your husband makes in his own behalf.

Inasmuch as you have Sun in the Sign Capricorn, Uranus is opposed to the Ascendant of your solar horoscope, and in square aspect with your Tenth House which rules prestige. Under the circumstances, it would be best for you to refrain from giving your husband advice about his career after he retires from the Police Force. Allow him to do what he thinks best. The results are likely to suit you better than if you were to direct the negotiations.

Burning Ambition

RITA P. C. writes: I went to dramatic school with the burning ambition to go on the stage. I have not been able to get an acting part, and my funds are running low. Should I give up my aim and return to my teaching job at a country school, or should I continue to look for a position in the theater? I was born August 23, 1927.

(Continued on page 92)

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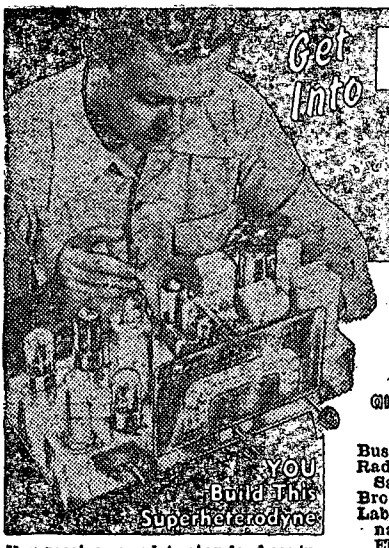

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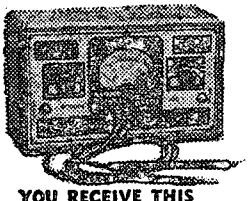

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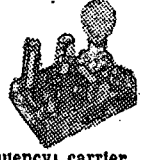

An electronic device, which produces audio-frequency signals for modulating R.F. (radio frequency) carrier waves, testing A.F. (audio frequency) amplifiers, speakers, etc.

T.R.F. RECEIVER

You build several T.R.F. Receivers, one of which, a 4-tube set, is shown here. You learn construction, alignment, make receiver tests, and do trouble shooting.

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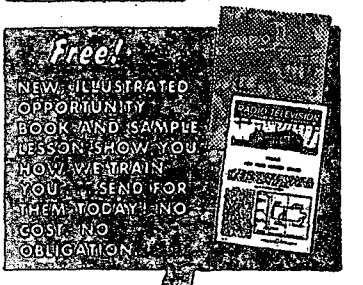
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IT'S JUST A FEW MILES TO HEADQUARTERS AND WE'LL RUSH YOU TO ORVILLE BY CAR
WONDERFUL! I'LL SEND A REPAIR CREW FOR THE PLANE TOMORROW

I DO HOPE WE'LL MAKE IT. MY APPEARANCE IS SET FOR EIGHT O'CLOCK
SAY! YOU MUST BE SANDY OLTNER, THE FLYING FIGURE SKATER!
AND I LOOK LIKE A TRAMP

HERE'S THE BLADE I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR! NEVER HAD SUCH SMOOTH SHAVING
THIN GILLETTES ARE MADE TO ORDER FOR TOUGH-BEARDED GENTS

OUR COMMITTEE IS GIVING A LITTLE PARTY FOR SANDY LATER. WILL YOU JOIN US?
THIS IS MY FIRST GOOD LOOK AT YOU, MISTER . . . YOU'RE HANDSOME!
WE-L-L . . .
PLEASE DO!

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When a girl from a staid New England town inherits a gay night club, she's soon hep to smartness, sophistication—and romance!

"I've hired her to work for me," said Don

Prudence's Progress

a novelet by MONA FARNSWORTH

CHAPTER I

NIGHT CLUB LEGACY

WHEN Prudence got off the train, she took a cab to the hotel Mr. Billingsley had mentioned. While she was cold-creaming her face to get the two-day-travel feeling out of it, she wondered just what to do next.

She could phone Fred Billingsley at his law office and tell him she had arrived. She hadn't known just when she would arrive when she'd written him because she hadn't known how many days she'd stay in New York shopping.

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Or, better still, she could go out to the Fan-tailed Peacock and see just what kind of a night club she'd fallen heir to.

She looked into the mirror, leaning close to it, and in the soft gold of the late afternoon sunlight the mould of her face was fine and clear even under the mask of cold cream.

"Prudence Adams," she addressed her reflection politely. "But recently of that staid little New England town Adams Center, and now the heiress of the Fan-tailed Peacock." She paused, wondering what the Fan-tailed Peacock looked like—she'd never been in a night club except once, in Boston, and then she'd thought it was garish and noisy and stupid. She also was wondering what her Uncle Lem had looked like. Uncle Lem was the one who had left her the night club when he'd died the month before and she'd been told that she'd seen him once when she was two years old and Uncle Lem had for some reason come to Adams Center.

"Lem was always one for traveling," Aunt Martha had remembered the night the letter had come from Fred Billingsley. "He even went to Paris and—shucks—going from Boston to New York was nothing for him."

Aunt Susan looked up and clicked her tongue in awe. Prudence looked from one to the other of them and thought how much she loved them—two New England spinsters with thin, stern faces and kind wonderful hearts. They'd brought Prue up when her windowed mother had died at her birth and they were the only family she'd ever known.

Don, Mort, and all the night club employes made excuses to drift in near Prudence's two aunts

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Aunt Susan said, "I can't understand why Lem should do it. Leaving that peacock thing to a young girl like Prue! It's the most light-headed thing I ever heard of."

"Lem was always light-headed," said Aunt Martha. "You know, Susan, as well as I do—there's always one black sheep in every family and," she lowered her voice, "Lem was ours." They both clucked their tongues in unison.

Then Aunt Susan had said, "What's the name of the outlandish place this peacock thing is in? Way off in some foreign land! What good's it to you?"

"It's in Albuquerque," said Prudence. "It's not foreign, Aunt Susan—it's New Mexico. And it'll do me a lot of good. I'm going there with some of the money Uncle Lem left me."

Of course that brought on a tornado. No nice young girl ever traveled alone! Had they brought her up like a lady to have her behave like a hoyden? What would the neighbors think? And so on.

Prudence said, "Look, you two darlings. The world has spun on a lot since you were young and it's all right for

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a girl to travel alone now. After all I'm not a child—I'm twenty."

"You're all we have," said Aunt Martha.

But in the end they'd let her go because a neighbor was going to New York and could chaperone her that far. For some strange reason that soothed the two aunts' minds and Prudence left home.

She thought of them now and she wiped the cold cream from her face and dressed to go out. That cute gull gray suit with its flaring skirt and tight little jacket, that hat of jade green feathers that sat so jauntily on her brown hair and the green gloves and green bag that were downright daring—if you'd been brought up in a place that was like Adams Center.

She had wanted to buy green shoes too but she hadn't been brave enough so she'd settled for gull gray suede piped in green. And if the aunts could have seen her they'd have raised their good Unitarian hands in horror. Fast, they'd have called her—and vulgar. But Prue, giving herself the eye in the mirror, though it wasn't half bad. She called the desk and told them she wanted a cab and she told the driver she wanted the Fan-tailed Peacock.

She sat in the cab as it went East on Central and South on Fourth and she tried to feel like an heiress on her way to the night club she owned. She, Prudence Adams, owned a night club. She said it over and over but she couldn't make it real.

"Here you are, Miss," said the driver and he nodded his head toward a spreading sand colored building that seemed to wander all over itself in angles and ells and terraces.

"Thanks," said Prue and paid him. But she didn't look at him, her eyes were wandering, fascinated, all over the building that was hers.

The cab went away and Prue went to the big heavy front door, bound with iron and painted bright blue. She touched the iron latch and it swung open.

"Oh—hello," said the man who'd opened the door. Then he grinned. "You know what we thought when the cab stopped? We thought it was the old maid heiress herself. Who are you?"

Prue looked at him. He had red hair and sea blue eyes and a smile that put crinkles in the corners of his eyes.

She said, "What old maid heiress?" And proceeded to make big innocent eyes at him.

He said, "Lem Adams who owned this joint, died awhile back and it seems he left it to an old maid from New England. What on earth *she's* going to do with a night club in Albuquerque is your guess as much as mine. Say!" His eyes suddenly sparkled. "You don't want a job, do you?"

"What," said Prue thinking fast, "do you think I'm here for?" She'd play it this way, she decided swiftly. She'd let them think an old maid was the new owner and she'd find out just what kind of a place this was. Her good New England sense told her she could learn a lot more about the business from the inside out that she'd ever be able to from the outside in.

The man said, "You're just what I've been looking for—you've got zip and zing and personality and you're beautiful. Ever taken pictures in a night club? Not that it makes any difference—this is one job where experience is no asset."

Prue said, "The X-Ray eye! He knows I have zip and zing when I've hardly opened my mouth."

"All right," said the man. "So I suppose you want to get a job as an entertainer and you'll snoot my offer of taking pictures. But let me tell you, girl, we have Mahara here and any night club that has Mahara certainly doesn't need anything else. So it's me or dishwashing."

"I'll take you, thanks," said Prue.

HE BOWED with a flourish and the rich gold of the setting sun made a bonfire on his hair. "Fine. So you are working from now on for Don Haven—which same is I—and I presume you have a name too."

"Oh, yes," said Prue with what she hoped was perfect poise. "Everybody has a name." And she tried to think of a good one. "How would Mary Jane do?" she asked brightly. "Mary Jane Jones."

"That's a heck of a name. What are

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you doing with it—hiding from the cops?"

She smiled sweetly at him.

He said, "Want to come in and see the scene of your endeavors?"

She put on indifference. "It's just like any other night club, isn't it?"

"Ha," said Don. "And again ho! You're new to the Southwest, aren't you? These night clubs, sister, are like nothing else. Cowboys come in jeans, the well dressed man wears an open collared shirt and no tie, girls wear formals or jeans—it's all one."

"It must be very colorful," said Prue.

"Juan Chavez has the best band in these parts," said Don. "Here you are." He'd ushered her through the door and across a foyer banked by the line of a checking counter and beyond the darkened doorway and the faint glimmer of a bar.

Ahead there was the spread of an arched doorway and beyond that were the tables, piled up with chairs and the square of polished floor and the band stand. More arches revealed more space and you had the feeling that the place spread on and on like catacombs.

Don said, "All you'll do, lady, is wander around and look so gay and utterly enticing that everybody will long to have you take their picture for the simple reason that that will mean they can look at you for an extra three minutes while you're focusing and snapping 'em."

"How do I focus?" asked Prue. "All I've ever worked is a box Brownie."

"That's all you need to work. I do the focusing. I fix the camera before I give it to you. The flash bulb and the shutter go off at the same time—and there you are. All you have to remember is how far away from the tables to stand. See? Like this." He showed her and it was simple.

"What do you want me to wear?" she asked. "Jeans?"

"Wear anything you like, only be sure you look devastating. It's for your sake as well as mine—you work on a percentage basis. On a good night you make eighty or ninety dollars—thirty percent of which is yours. On a poor night, say the night before pay-day, you make two-fifty. The same thirty percent for you."

Prue said, "Can you figure out thirty percent of two dollars and a half? I can't."

"Do you want the job?" His voice sounded tense. In the half light his eyes bit into hers.

"Of course I want the job," she said.

"What job?" asked a new voice and Prue saw, farther back in the shadow of an archway, a man she hadn't known was there.

He came forward and she could see the breadth of his shoulders, the trimness of his hips.

He said, "What are you doing, Don—getting in on the ground floor with another lovely?"

"I've hired her to work for me," said Don. "She begins tonight. Her name is Mary Jane Jones." He turned to Prue: "His is Morton Tomins. He manages the joint. He bosses everybody but me, and I free lance here—"

"With my permission," said Morton Tomins.

"—so he can't boss me."

"That makes it better?" asked Prue.

"Oh, I'm not such a tough boss," said the man. He reached out and snapped on a few lights so that she could see the smoothness of his black hair and the velvet softness of his dark eyes. He could see her too, and apparently he was delighted. "Well!" he said. "And where did Don find you?"

"She came here hunting for a job and I caught her first," said Don.

"A job?" asked Morton. "What do you do?"

"I sing," said Prue promptly. And this was true. She'd sung in the church choir in Adams Center ever since she'd been thirteen years old.

Morton shook his head. "Too bad. We've got a singer. Mahara's here. But we'll give you a chance sometime to show us what you can do."

"Thanks," said Prue, trusting that such a time would never come.

"You know," said Morton, "all our jobs are hanging by a hair. This place has been left to an old maid from New England and heaven knows where the ax will fall when she gets here—which will be any minute. For all we know she'll turn it into a day nursery and

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then—" He made a grating sound in his throat and ran his finger across his neck.

CHAPTER II

JOB WITH A CAMERA

DON drove her back to town in a 1935 Cadillac convertible that still hummed like a Swiss watch and that, with all the 1948 cars whirling around it could still hold its own.

He said, as they went across the South Fourth bridge and the shallow expanse of the Rio Grande, "You'd think Mort was really afraid of losing his job, wouldn't you? He can sure make a line sound convincing."

"Is it a line?" asked Prue. And then added, "I don't see how it can be. If your old maid comes and decides to shut up the night club what can Mort do?"

"Do?" Don grinned at her. "You don't know Mort. He'll fix it so he lands on his feet—even if he has to marry the old gal."

"Oh," said Prue. So there were wheels within wheels. She wondered if she'd have fallen for Mort—supposing she'd come as herself and he'd given her a rush. He was very handsome and, if he put himself out for a girl, might be irresistible. She was suddenly very glad she'd become May Jane Jones. She might have gotten badly tripped if barged into this thing as herself.

She said to Don, "Let me out where the shops are, please. I've got to get a couple of things." But it wasn't shopping that she had on her mind. It was getting back to the Franciscan Hotel and checking out as Prudence Adams so that she could check in somewhere else as Mary Jane Jones. If there were any plans afoot to double cross Prudence, Mary Jane had better find out about it.

Don left her at Fourth and Central and she walked the two blocks to the Franciscan. She hadn't unpacked so she didn't need to pack and in twenty minutes she was checked out and in a cab.

"Leaving town?" asked the driver conversationally, stowing her bags. "Super Chief and the Chief have already gone—both ways. You want the Airport or the bus terminal?"

"Bus terminal," said Prue, feeling that she had to say something. After all, if she wanted to cover Prudence Adam's trail, she might as well do a good job. So she went to the bus terminal and, after ten minutes, called another cab company.

She finally landed, bag and baggage, in a tourist cabin not three blocks from the Fan-tailed Peacock. And then, sitting on the edge of her very comfortable bed, she felt like a fool. Coming out in the world like this from a crossroads place like Adams Center had gone to her head. Or she'd seen too many movies lately. Or that comic she'd picked up in the train had unbalanced her mind. Something was wrong with her. She'd carried on like a G-Man. And all because Don had implied that Morton Tomins was planning to get the best of Prudence Adams.

Well—she got up from the bed—maybe she had been a silly goose but she'd done it now. No use going back. She'd go on being Mary Jane Jones and see what came of it.

She wore black that first night—you were always safe in black. Though this was kind of special with a tricky neckline and so beautifully cut otherwise that Prue looked chiseled. She walked to the club surprised to find that a winter evening had apparently followed a summer day and that her fox jacket—bought in New York and what would the aunts say?—was necessary.

She went into the Fan-tailed Peacock and a river of light, a blaze of music and an explosion of color greeted her. It was a totally different place than it had been, dark and drab and quiet, in the afternoon. It was crowded, it was noisy. The dance floor was packed and the bar was filled. Obviously the place was a going concern.

Don came up. "You know how to pick clothes and also how to wear them," he murmured. "Good girl. Here's your camera."

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She said, "Thanks," and took the camera. There had been no flattery in his tone when he'd mentioned her clothes, it was nothing personal. He'd asked her for business reasons to look well and she'd obliged. That was all. Well, what did she want? She glanced at him. What would those twinkling blue eyes look like if they got deep and tender?

How would his mouth— She yanked her thoughts up. What was the matter with her?

"Stand about this far away from the table you're taking," he was saying. "And remember that your money and mine comes from every print after the first. On the first print we make some, but on duplicates we make a lot more. So talk to 'em glib, girl. Wheedle 'em, needle 'em, and get the plural orders. Understand?"

"Oh, yes," said Prue. "Yes, I understand."

FOR the first time since all this started she got panicky. Up till this instant taking pictures in a night club had been something vague and shadowy like reading about famine in India. But suddenly, right now, it wasn't vague and shadowy any longer. It was real. It was here. With her very next step she had to head toward a table and say—Well, what would she say?

Words scrambled in her brain, choked in her throat.

Don said, "Go on over there. Those guys are here for a convention. You can tell 'em as far off as you can see 'em. Go on, talk 'em into fifty dozen. They're always good for a lot."

Prue went over to the table Don had pointed out. It was a big table and filled with men. She opened her mouth but no words came. One of the men looked at her.

"Hello, sister. What can we do for you?"

"Oh, look," said another. "She's got a camera. Hey, everybody! Look at the pretty girl with the camera. I bet she'd take our pictures. Hey, sister—take our pictures?"

"Certainly," said Prue. She took it. Her hands were shaking and she jumped when the flash bulb went off but probably it was all right. Don seemed to think the shot was practically fool proof.

A man yelled, "I want a half dozen of those. I'll hand 'em around the office when I get home."

So they all wanted half dozen lots, and Prue had made a wonderfully successful sale with her first try and with hardly opening her mouth. It gave her confidence and that made her gay so that from then on the sales piled up. Don kept an eye on her which at first she resented—didn't he trust her?—but which she soon was grateful for. Cowboys, hooking their high heels on the brass rail, made passes at her, a fat man tried to kiss her, a thin man was ready to fight because she wouldn't drink. But Don was always on hand.

"Sorry, sir," he'd say with that grin of his. "Miss Jones takes your picture but that's all she does take. All right with you?" And his eyes would sparkle, his smile would wrap them in warm friendship and nine times out of ten they'd smile back. If they didn't Danny, the round-faced cheerful bar-man, or Mort himself would help out. Mort was moving around, everywhere at once. He was a good manager. Prue, watching him, recognized his ability, and she also realized that every time she looked at him, his dark eyes were ready and waiting to smile at her.

At nine o'clock the floor show came on for the late diners, the lights went out, the spotlight circled—and there was Mahara. Small, ivory skinned, white net and satin frothing around her, white Spanish lace flowing like a water-fall from a high carved ivory comb she stood there as still as a carved statue.

But, still as she was, you could feel the vitality sparkling from her, you knew that to touch her would be like touching electricity.

"Isn't she wonderful?" breathed Don in Prue's ear. "Lord, there's nobody like her."

And then she danced. A fandango to end all fandangos with touches and steps and a fire that only Mahara could give.

Prue felt her breath catch, she felt her heart almost stop. She'd never seen anything like it, but then, she

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thought with true New England caution, she hadn't been around much.

There was a final crescendo and crash of music, Mahara stopped in a whirl of creamy skirts. The applause made the glasses and silverware on the tables jump.

"Oh, boy!" said Don. "I tell you there's nothing like her. Nothing. She's been here a month and I've seen every show. You never get tired watching her. Never."

All right, thought Prue. So you never get tired watching her. So what? So that's fine. But why was she so angry about it?

And why did she feel as if somebody was stirring her all up inside with a sharp knife?

MORT moved over from a doorway and stood beside her.

"What do you think of her?" he asked.

"She's wonderful."

"She draws the crowds. She's increased business here forty percent. If I were sure of keeping this place, I'd sign her up for another two months."

"Aren't you sure of keeping it?" asked Prue remembering what Don had said.

Mort shook his head. "I won't know anything till the new owner comes. Seriously—what would an old maid want with a night club?" He looked gloomy and sad. "I'm fond of this place," he muttered.

"Maybe you could buy it," suggested Prue.

He slanted a glance at her. "With what?" he asked and walked off.

Prue looked after him. He certainly didn't look like a man who was bitterly determined to get hold of a night club. He looked like a man who saw no way of even lifting a finger to keep a place he was fond of. So Don had been all wet. But why had Don bothered to say what he had said about Mort? It seemed a very silly waste of breath.

"I'll run you home," said Don when the place was closing and the last customer had gone. "You've been a good girl to-night—lots of business for papa. I like you."

And he grinned at her.

"You'd like anybody," said Prue crossly, "who brought in your old pictures."

"Sure," said Don. "Wouldn't you? What is there in life beside business?"

Prue didn't answer. She was trying to figure out why his more or less natural attitude should make her feel so bitter and hurt and angry. What was it to her what kind of attitude he had?

He drove her to the plastered, adobe-looking office of the tourist cabins. He made no gesture toward opening the door for her so she opened it herself and got out.

"You can't get lost between here and your cabin, can you?" he asked jauntily and drove off.

She stared after him, her surprise churning to anger. No good-night, no thank you—no nothing. Well! She whirled away, her heels clicking angrily on the narrow cement walk.

"Hey!" yelled a voice.

Prue didn't turn. Her aunts hadn't brought her up to turn when a man yelled, "Hey!" at three o'clock in the morning.

"Mary Jane Jones! Come here and get your dough."

It was Don and she turned slowly. He'd U-turned his car and it was at the curb heading the wrong way. He got out and came toward her.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I forgot to give you your third." He grinned cheerily. "I always pay off each night so that if a girl gets too mad at me she can leave with no hard feelings or inconvenience."

"Thanks," said Prue. "Both for the money and the permission."

"You're not leaving?" It was a sudden, sharp question shot oddly with alarm.

Prue looked up at him quickly, lifting her face so that it was a pale blur in the night.

And Don kissed her. It was a fierce, abrupt, thrusting kiss. It was defiant and angry and unwilling, and it burned Prue's lips like a flame.

Almost before it had begun it was over. Don lifted his head and almost pushed her away.

"There!" his voice shook with a kind of disgusted anger. "I hope you're satisfied. That's just what I *didn't* want to do!"

And with a final glare he swung around and strode back to his car.

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CHAPTER III

KISS—AND FORGET

PRUE'S shaking fingers were still fumbling with her key when she heard the car door slam and the motor roar. She banged open her cabin door and slammed it behind her. She was so furious that, as she snapped on the light, the whole cabin fuzzed into a red haze. She'd never go to work with that insulting, horrific, conceited, cock-eyed idiot again. She'd take her mad-money and she'd leave this crazy town. She'd go back to New England where she belonged and write back to Fred Billingsley and have him sell the place for whatever he could get.

She thought all this while she was getting undressed and she'd decided flatly about it before she went to sleep. But when she woke up at noon the next day somehow it all looked different. As she showered and dressed she told herself what a poor sport she'd be to run away. Why get so mad about a kiss anyhow? Why give Don the satisfaction of knowing how angry he'd gotten her? Far better to go on coolly as if nothing had happened.

She went out in search of breakfast but when she passed the Fan-tailed Peacock the door was open so she went in. Mort was in the office, the bright noon light putting a satin sheen on his black hair, and his eyes gleamed when he saw her.

"This is wonderful!" his voice was deep and warm and he got up to come toward her. "Or maybe," his tone dropped with disappointment, "you just came looking for Don."

The very name made Prue flush. "I'm certainly not looking for Don," she said firmly. "He's the last person I want to see."

Mort's smooth black eyebrows lifted. "That so? I'm surprised. Don's usually got a way with gals. They fall for him in rows. I figure it's those blue eyes of his."

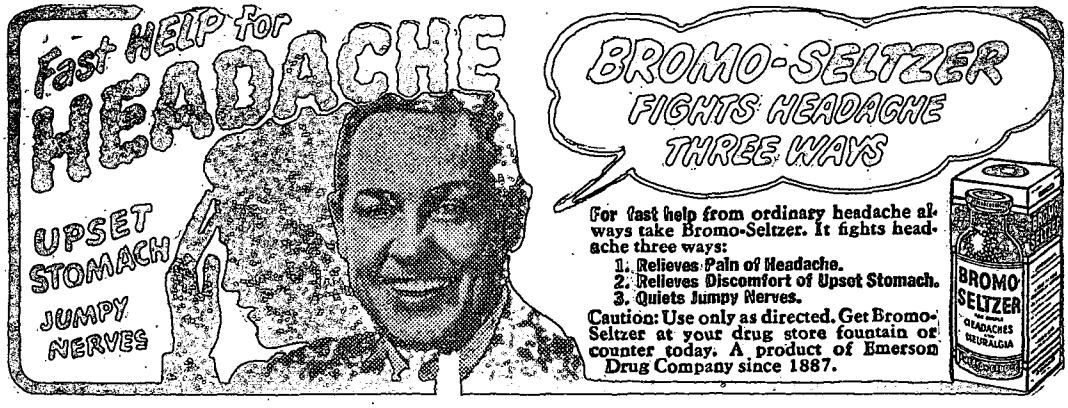
"Has he blue eyes?" asked Prue, as if she didn't know it. And as she spoke she could see them, laughing, twinkling, so gay they made your heart tingle. She pushed them out of her mind.

Mort said, "Well, I'm glad to know you're not here to see Don," his dark eyes narrowed slightly and he smiled, "because that gives me a chance. Do you know you're an unusually lovely girl?" He touched her hand with a slim ivory finger. Then he chuckled. "I'm sure glad you're not this Prudence Adams because I'd lose you for sure to Don then."

"Why?" Prue felt her heart turn, and she felt as if she were in a room where, slowly and slowly, a door was opening.

Mort said, "Because Don swears that when this dame arrives, he's going to marry her and her night club if it's the last thing he does, even if she looks like Frankenstein. He says it's the first time he's ever had a good whack at an heiress and he's going to make the most of it. What are you staring at?"

[*Turn page*]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What was she staring at? Almost the same words—certainly the same idea—that Don had told her Mort had said. So they were both going to make a play for Prudence Adams. More darn fun. And was she glad she was here as Mary Jane Jones.

She said, "Oh, I was just thinking of something."

"Hi-ya, Mort!" The street door slammed and steps came running. "I tell ya what it is, this doggone town—oh!" It was Mahara. She romped to the door like a cowboy, and then she saw Prue. She stopped short and, as Prue looked at her, she became the graceful and languorous Spanish beauty. She shrugged faintly and her lashes drooped. "Miss—Jones, isn't it?" she drawled.

Mort laughed. "You don't need to put it on for her," he said. "She's okay." Then he turned to Prue. "Mahara's wonderful," he said. "Nobody knows a thing about her. She never tells the same story about herself twice. I've heard her in one evening tell fellows she's a Creole from an old New Orleans family and that she's Spanish and a descendant of Armijo himself, and that she's Mexican and traces her lineage back to Montezuma no less." He burst into laughter.

MAHARA laughed too, a deliciously delicate peal like crystal bells.

"What would you?" She shrugged. "Surely many people can make such a claim—he must have had the children like drops of rain five-six hundred years ago—why could not my ancestor have been one of them? Is it so impossible?" She laughed again and then, dropping completely the charming and delicate accent, she said, "If you really wanta know I was born in Brooklyn. Brownsville. Right near Pitkin Avenya. Believe me, huh?" Her words were round and full and rich with the roll of Brooklyn.

Mort said, "Mahara! You devil, what are you?"

Mahara, all Spanish mystery again, said, "That is I! A devil. Diablo. Mahara-Diablo. Bill me that way, Morton. It will—what you say?—knock them out. Ah-h-h!" She kissed the tips of her fingers and blew the kiss to the ceiling. "I do a dance with red tights and the horns, eh?" She flung her arms wide, "Everyone will love me! Are you hungry, Miss Jones? I am. Come on, let's go to the Coronado and get a sopaipilla sandwich. Ever had one? They're lush."

"No, I've never had one," said Prue. She laughed at Mahara and she liked her. Vitality sparkled from her, crackling, toniclike in quality, at it did when she was on the dance floor and her constant switch of personalities and accent added to the dazzle.

The door opened and Don came in. He stood a second on the threshold letting his bright blue eyes touch each one of them and Prue tried to keep her face from flushing and her heart from tumbling. Why on earth did this man do such things to her? If she were falling in love with him, she could understand it, but she didn't even like the guy. In fact, to put it bluntly, she hated him.

He came in and slapped a stack of large envelopes on Mort's desk.

"Here's last night's pictures," he said. "Maybe some of 'em will be picked up and those that aren't I'll mail later. Anybody hungry?" His eyes touched Prue's and held them. "Come on," he said. "I'll bet anything you haven't had breakfast yet." And somehow, before she knew it, she was sitting in the big convertible and Don was swinging it out into Isleta Highway.

He said, with his eyes on the road, "I'm sorry about last night."

"That's all right," said Prue, wondering which part he was sorry for.

"I was a heel," he went on. "But—oh, heck!—I've been wanting to kiss you since the first minute I saw you."

"Is that such a crime?" asked Prue softly, and she was surprised to hear the singing note in her voice and to feel the happiness that bubbled in her throat. "Kissing me didn't hurt, did it?"

"It was wonderful," said Don and the huskiness in his voice showed how much he meant it. "But I didn't want—I mean I shouldn't have done it."

"Why not?" asked Prue sharply and her heart hung still waiting for his answer. She remembered suddenly how enthusiastic he'd been about Mahara. Was he in love with her? She said, "Are you engaged, or married, to somebody?"

"Heck, no! There's no other girl in

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my life at all—no important girl. It's just that—Oh, skip it. I'm glad I kissed you and I'm going to kiss you again as soon as I can, if you'll let me. But I was rude last night, I was beastly, and that's the reason. Will you forgive me?"

"Yes," said Prue, not understanding any of this very clearly but feeling suddenly drowned in a warm flood that seemed to mean she'd forgive him almost anything.

He said, "Darling," but his tone was so low she couldn't be sure he said it. She did feel his hand, though, as he reached over swiftly and laid it for a second over hers. The touch flamed through her, setting her heart to racing and running electric sparks in her veins.

"Oh, Don!" Her heart said it and not even a whisper came to her lips but in that second she knew she loved him. She knew that from the first she'd loved him, that his eyes had warmed their way into her heart and that it would be his smile that she'd always hang her dreams on.

THEY had their brunch at the Alverado where, on the long piazza, the Indians squatted with their heads bound with twisted bits of bright cloth and their trays of tourist souvenirs beside them. But Prue didn't see the Indians. She only realized that, as they walked, Don's shoulder brushed her hair and Don's hand was light holding her arm. She wasn't at all sure what they ate, either, but she would always remember the way Don's eyes poured warmth into hers and the way his smile moved the muscles of his cheeks and the way his red hair caught the light and made it glitter like newly polished copper.

Afterward they drove out to Isleta and followed the road that twisted and curled through the pueblo.

"See?" said Don. "Not an Indian in sight, and hundreds of them live here."

Prue looked around obediently and really saw the low adobe buildings for the first time, their walls bright with strings of red peppers, the hive shaped ovens near the door-yards. And, sure enough, not the sign of an Indian.

Don said, "I know a man who has friends out here and when *he* comes out here they pour out of their pueblos laughing and shouting their welcome to him and when he says 'Beautiful!' about anything they have, they say 'It's yours. Take it—take it. You are our friend.' But when strangers come out, such as you and me, they disappear."

Prue said, "Why?"

Don's lips twisted a little. "Wouldn't you disappear," he asked, "if you were an Indian in a white man's country?"

That night when Prue took pictures everything was different. Don was proud of her and he loved her, she could feel the knowledge of it wrapping her like a cloak and bathing her in a golden glow. It made the lights softer and brighter, it made everyone gayer so that the laughter was a glittering cascade and Prue, when she walked, didn't seem to touch the floor at all.

Mort said, "You look as if you're riding the stars. Don must have gone into his act."

Prue stared at him. Something horrible and cold touched her and then anger swept through her, sparkling and hot.

"You're a despicable person, aren't you?" she said scornfully and moved away.

They had another good night and Prue learned lots of things. She learned how many drinks a man had to have, before he could be talked into spending eight or ten dollars for pictures. She learned the kind of line that best inveigled a man to order four pictures when, reluctantly, he was only willing to get one, and she discovered the trick of pleasing the customers by letting them buy her drinks and then sending word to the barman that it was for the picture girl so he'd give her plain ginger ale.

She also learned how to hand back line for line and wisecrack for wisecrack so that she could take care of herself and Mort and Don didn't have to rescue her all the time. This last Mahara taught her.

"Look, kid," said the girl who might be a Spanish princess but who also might have been born in Williamsburg, "this whole thing's a game—see? Either you win or the other guy wins. Of course," she shrugged, "nobody can win all the time, but it's your business to

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see that you win most of the time."

Prue wondered just what she meant by that last but she decided to look wise and sophisticated and ask no questions.

Just before closing Mort came to stand beside her.

"Nobody is left to have their pictures taken," he said. "You must have cleaned up tonight. Let's dance."

Instinctively Prue looked around for Don. If she were going to dance, she'd so much rather dance with him.

Mort smiled at her. "Don's over in that corner talking to Mahara," he said. "He won't care what you do."

Prue's cheeks flamed. Just as Mort had spoken she'd seen Don and he certainly didn't look as if he'd care about anything, except Mahara. He was bending toward her across a small table and both his hands were holding both of hers.

Prue said, "Yes, let's dance." She sounded—and she felt—as if she were choking.

CHAPTER IV

SHATTERED DREAM

MORT danced like a bar of moonlight, silvery smooth but glittering too. And he held Prue as if she were something infinitely precious, his arm firm and tender, his hands light and strong. The steps he led her through were swift and intricate but, even with her mind spinning and her eyes turned stonily away from the small table where Don held Mahara's hands, she could follow him.

"You're beautiful — you're wonderful!" crooned Mort softly. And then he whispered, "Do you know I'm falling in love with you?"

Prue glanced up at him swiftly. His brown eyes were deep and tender, his smile was soft.

"You're a very handsome man, Mort," said Prue.

His smile flickered a little. "But you don't want me to fall in love with you?"

"No," said Prue. "No, I don't." And she closed her eyes so she couldn't look at Don and Mahara in their corner. Maybe by this time he was kissing her and if he were Prue certainly didn't want to see it.

But when the music stopped and Prue walked off the floor, there was Don waiting for her and Mahara wasn't in sight.

"Come on," said Don easily. "I'll take you home, and tell me I'm a good boy because victory sits upon my brow. I've finally made Mahara promise to sit for some color shots for me. I'll bet I sell a magazine cover of that girl. I sure ought to—she's good."

"Oh!" said Prue faintly. "Was that what you were doing?"

Don looked at her and his grin was like a neon light.

"You were jealous!" his tone was jubilant and then he said softly, "Do you know what that means? When a gal's jealous of a guy?" He bent toward her so that his lips almost touched her hair. "You darling!" he whispered.

The three-block drive from the night club to Prue's cabin was a dreamlike thing. Prue knew that the minute Don stopped the car she was going to be kissed as she'd never been kissed before, and she knew that Don knew it. So the sharply cool night breeze on her cheek was almost burning and the stars, above the stark branches of the cottonwoods, glittered with fresh fire.

Then the car slurred to a stop under the thickest cottonwood branches of all and Don took her into his arms.

The kiss was as she'd dreamed it would be. It was like soaring up the curve of a rainbow, like having stars flash through her veins, like having Northern Lights burst in her heart. Her lips clung to his, her hands crept around his shoulders and eternity was as endless as Prue hoped this would be. Forever and forever was too short.

At last he raised his head. Even in the dark shadow she could see the glow of his eyes.

"Little Prue—" he said very softly.

An icy knife seemed to cut Prue's breath.

"*What did you call me?*" Her heart stopped, waiting for his answer.

He laughed. "You don't mind my

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guessing who you are?" he asked. "After all it seems pretty obvious, doesn't it? Prudence Adams is due to show up and you arrive, and then you take that crazy name, Mary Jane Jones that's so obviously a phony."

"Is it?" asked Prue freezingly. "Well, that's definitely too bad, because it's my name. And if you were making all this play for me because you thought I was the girl who had inherited the night club, you're barking up the wrong tree. My name is Mary Jane Jones and I haven't a night club up my sleeve anywhere. So— Stop shaking me!"

"I'll do more than shake you if you go babbling on like this. What do you mean, if I'm making this play for you because you have a night club?"

"Mort told me," said Prue. "He said you'd told him you were going to marry Prudence Adams if she looked like Frankenstein. He said you'd said you'd never had a whack at an heiress before and you were going to make the most of it."

THERE was a hard tight silence that was like a sour green apple. A twisted bitter sickness flowed through Prue.

She said in a very small voice, "Aren't you going to deny it?"

"No," said Don. "I'm not going to deny it."

"You said it?"

"Sure I said it, if that's what you want to believe. So I was rude and nasty to you last night because it hadn't dawned on me who you were." His voice was harsh as torn tin. "But last night I had a chance to think it over and I got wise to myself, so this morning I apologized for my ungentlemanly behavior and immediately began building up a good play for you—which climaxed just now in that kiss. In another second, if you'd patted my cheek instead of blowing your top, I'd have proposed to you. Isn't that the way you figure it?"

Prue said nothing because, in that sickening instant when she'd heard him call her Prue, that was exactly the way she'd figured it.

He said, "All right, so my little game is up and, whether you're Prudence Adams or not, my chances with you are over. Okay, lady, though I trust you keep on working for me because you're a good money-maker." And, sliding out of his seat, he started around to open the door for her.

But by the time he put his foot on the curb she was out and blazing at him.

"I hate you! I hate you—and hate you and hate you!" Then, in a swirl of skirts she was gone. And he was gone too with a roar of his motor and a rushing skirl of tires.

Prue didn't sleep much that night. She tossed and turned, finally deciding that the room was insufferably hot. So she opened another window and then couldn't sleep because she was too cold. Then she was hungry and then she was thirsty and she got more wide awake than ever thinking about it. And none of this, she told herself furiously, had anything at all to do with that red-headed lunk, Don Haven, and just don't think it did! She was crying and wakeful and furious and desperate because she liked to be. Finally, at dawn, she slept.

She woke up next morning with an empty feeling where her heart had danced the day before and again she thought of going home. It would be so simple—just take a train and write the law officials of Fred Billingsley in the First National Bank Building to sell the Fan-tailed Peacock and send her the money. Very simple. But she knew she wouldn't do it. She whipped up all kinds of reasons to convince herself as to why she shouldn't do it but she knew there was only one reason. Though she got out of bed quickly and ran to the shower to avoid admitting it even to herself.

As she came out of the shower with her robe clutched around her Mrs. Gates, who ran the cabins, knocked on her door.

"Gentleman to see you, Miss Jones," she called. "He says don't eat breakfast because he's come to take you out."

Prue called, "Th-thank you!" and her heart took wings. Suppose Don had come back to tell her it was all a mistake. That he'd fallen in love with her really and not because he'd thought she might be Prudence Adams. Suppose he said that it was just his red-headed temper that had exploded the night be-

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fore and he hoped she wasn't too upset. Oh, if he'd just say that! If he'd just take her into his arms!

But when she went out it wasn't Don, it was Mort. Prue stared at him blankly. Then she smiled because having Mort around was a lot better than facing a long day alone.

He said, "I couldn't keep away. You don't mind, do you?" His smile was tender, his eyes like velvet.

Prue smiled back at him. And she found that the warmth and tenderness comforted her sore heart. Maybe, she thought swiftly, maybe she hadn't really been in love with Don at all, maybe it was just infatuation and she'd get over it if she got interested in somebody else —say Mort. Maybe now it was only her pride and her temper that was upset and she wasn't really heartbroken at all. Maybe. It was worth trying anyway.

SHE slipped her arm in Mort's and smiled up at him some more as he led her out to his car. He pressed her arm and his eyes grew deep.

"Sweet girl," he said softly.

They drove over to Central and went west to Old Town.

"The original Spanish settlement," said Mort. "It was founded three or four hundred years ago and a lot of the houses are just the same as they were then. Some of the native population still live here and otherwise it's a kind of Albuquerque Greenwich Village."

Prue looked over the quaint square with its ancient trees bending above it and the ancient buildings crowding it and she loved it. Almost her imagination could people it with Coronado and his swashbuckling soldiers and with the grace of Spanish beauty that came after him.

Mort said, "This place I'm taking you to, La Placita, has only been a restaurant for a few years. Before that it belonged for generations to one of the oldest Spanish families in New Mexico. They were governors and all kinds of things. They tell all kinds of romantic stories about the place and somehow the man who bought it has managed to keep all the atmosphere. I think you'll like it."

Prue loved it. The wandering rooms, the thick walls, and deep-set leaded windows and the riot of color that tumbled everywhere in Mexican hangings, Indian rugs, long clusters of red peppers hanging from black rafters and against the white walls, tall candles in ancient wrought iron sconces and bright tin Mexican candlesticks all fascinated her. Paintings, done by Indians, Mexicans, Spaniards and visiting artists, lined the walls, the tables were gay with Mexican cloths while some of the chairs were raw-hide with their deeply curved backs and others were painted with Mexican flowers in brilliant, primitive colors.

"I've never seen anything like it," said Prue.

"Neither have I," said Mort. "It tops them all."

CHAPTER V

Surprise Visit

THEIR table was out in the patio where a thick trunked tree grew up through the glass roof to spread its branches against the sky and where the floor was covered by the large uneven original flagstones. A waitress in a gaily flowered Mexican skirt and embroidered peasant blouse took their order and brought them the delicious highly seasoned food.

Prue said, "Imagine the Fan-tailed Peacock fixed up like this. I think I'll —" she stopped and glanced quickly at Mort. His dark eyes were watching her.

"You'll do what?" he asked.

"I think I'll bring the owner here, whenever she turns up, and see if I can't talk her into redecorating the Peacock." She said it smoothly and quickly and Mort laughed.

"For a minute there you sounded as if you owned the joint yourself," He laughed again. "Prudence Adams in disguise."

"What would you do if I were Prudence Adams?" asked Prue.

"Do?" Mort looked at her blankly. Then his dark eyes grew thoughtful.

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"I'd be sorry in a way," he said. "Because then I'd have a tough time convincing you I was crazy about you for yourself alone. You'd be apt to think I was putting on an act because I wanted the Peacock."

"That's what Don said you'd planned to do."

"Don said that?" He stared at her.

"Don said that you were going to go after this Prudence Adams no matter what she looked like or who she turned out to be because you wanted the night club."

"Good glory!" Mort eyed her in amused digust. "Do I look like that kind of guy?" he demanded. And then he added, "Don's got the idea of wangling the night club so much on his own brain, he thinks everyone else'll be out to wangle it too."

Prue said, "Is the property so valuable?"

Mort shrugged. "Not according to New York realty values maybe but it's a good property and the buildings are good buildings. It's free and clear, which is a lot to say, and it's made more than any other night club in town this year."

"That," said Prue, "is because of your management."

Mort laughed and took a bow.

"I do love the place," he said.

After lunch they went to the movies and Mort held her hand, playing with her fingers and lifting them to his lips. She slanted a look at him occasionally and thought how handsome he was, but she thought too of the way her fingers would have felt if it had been Don kissing them and just imagining it made a small flame run through her, a flame that increased the anger that rolled in her heart.

When they came out onto the street again the early December dusk was turning from violet to blue.

"I'd better get back to my chores," said Mort and they drove together out to the Fan-tailed Peacock.

The dinner crowd hadn't begun to come yet and Don wasn't there. Prue realized, in the moment that she felt relief, that all day long she'd been pushing decision from her. She didn't want to work any longer with Don. How could she, after what had happened? But she didn't want to leave the club either. She wanted to stick around. Maybe she could learn to manage it herself. And maybe—who knew?—she might fall in love with Mort. They'd make a very good team. She'd own the club and he could keep on managing it. Even if she didn't love him it would be a smart arrangement. Lots of people married for sense and not love. The French always so arranged marriages and everything turned out very well.

Mort said, "I'll go see if Charley's got a good steak and if he has I'll get him to broil it for us. Don't go 'way, now." He smiled at her and went off toward the kitchens.

CHARLEY had the steak and when it came in it was perfect. While they ate it the dinner crowd drifted in and then Prue looked up to find Don standing in the doorway looking at her. Her heart contracted and fireflies seemed to dance along her veins. She turned swiftly to Mort and laid her hand over his. Instantly his fingers turned to fold hers and, as he had in the movies, he raised her hand to his lips.

"Sweet," he whispered. And then, "If this wasn't such a darned public place I'd kiss you."

"Would you?" asked Prue and she put a good deal of wistfulness into it.

Don left the doorway and walked toward them. Out of the corner of her eye Prue saw him and she made her smile even sweeter, tilting her face and glinting her eyes at Mort through their lashes.

Mort said, "Lord, you're wonderful!" and his voice was husky and shaking.

Don reached their table and stood looking at them. Prue kept on looking at Mort through her lashes and Mort didn't move his eyes from her.

Don said evenly, "I've got a new camera here for you for tonight, Miss Jones. I'll show you how to use it."

"Later," said Mort. "She's eating dinner now. Can't you see?"

"After dinner then," said Don, his voice still flat and even. And he walked off, his shoulders looking as if his muscles were bunched tense and tight beneath them.

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So Prue took pictures once more for Don. She told herself it was definitely the last time. She told herself she wouldn't have anything more to do with him at all. She told herself firmly that she hated him, and she took to trembling whenever he was even in sight.

And such nonsense couldn't go on. By nine o'clock she'd made up her mind what she was going to do. She'd admit her ownership and fire Don. Then, sometime or other, she'd marry Mort and forget she'd ever known a red-headed fire-eater named Don Haven.

The evening crowds came in and the place began really to fill up. Prue went through the archway into the next room.

"Your picture?" she asked mechanically. And then she gasped, staring. "Aunt Susan!" she whispered. For a paralyzed second her eyes froze on the faded blue eyes of her aunt then, flashing, they whipped around the table. Aunt Martha was there too and a strange man and another strange woman. Prue's mind spun.

Aunt Susan said, "Prudence Adams! Where've you been? When you didn't write, we telegraphed Mr. Billingsley—" she nodded toward the man—"and he brought us here."

"Mr. Billingsley," said Prue, "please, I must talk quickly and I haven't time, right now, to explain." Her mind had been whirring and her words rushed. "Aunt Susan, will you be me for a little while? Tell people, if they ask you, that you are Prudence Adams, that you've come to claim the club."

"Are you crazy, child?" Aunt Susan's mouth went narrow and tight. "I'm not going to tell lies. And there's no sense to it."

"Please Aunt Susan! You don't know what it means to me! It means—I've got to find out—Mr. Billingsley, you tell her it's all right!"

"I don't know that it is all right, Miss Adams." Fred Billingsley was inclined to be pompous, his hair was scant, his cheeks pudgy and his eyes had the look in them of a man who had learned to look around corners. He said, "It has been my experience that any masquerade can turn into bad business."

"But this would only be for a little while! And it's important to me! You don't know how important. It—it's my whole life's happiness and if you'll only help me."

"I'll do it," said Aunt Martha suddenly. "If Susan won't, I will. I've known Prue all her life and I've never caught her in a lie nor known her to make trouble for anyone, and she's not doing it now. If she says it's important to her why, it's important. So I'm Prudence Adams like she wants me to be, and so who are you, child?"

"Mary Jane Jones," said Prue in a hushed voice. "And oh! Aunt Martha I'll never get over being grateful for this! You don't know! You—" Over Aunt Martha's head she saw Don coming toward her and she moved her very best smile up over her face. "So you will have your pictures taken?" she asked gaily. "That's lovely! Now if you'll put your head a little more that way— Thank you! That's fine." She swung the camera up. "Don't jump when the flash bulb goes off," she warned. And snapped the shutter.

AUNT Susan jumped but Aunt Martha took it like a Hollywood star. And as Prue lowered the camera she smiled brightly.

"Would you be interested in knowing, miss, whose picture you just took?" she asked in a loud clear voice. "I'm Prudence Adams and I've fallen heir to this place. This is my sister, Susan, and my lawyer, Mr. Billingsley, with his wife."

"How do you do?" murmured Prue but she didn't dare look at any of them.

The news traveled fast. It sizzled around the whole place like a string of firecrackers. Mort came up and greeted Aunt Martha warmly, Don was introduced and Prue watched his eyes grow a deeper blue. The waiters and the bus boys made excuses to drift past and even the barman found an errand that would bring him near Aunt Martha's table.

And Aunt Martha was having the time of her life. She glowed and twinkled, her stern New England eyes danced and her tight New England mouth never lost its smile. For the first time in her life she was the center of swirling attention and she lapped it up like a

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kitten with a saucer full of cream. Once when Prue passed their table Aunt Martha raised a commanding finger.

"Miss," she called peremptorily. "Would you please step here?"

Prue went to her, wondering and a little alarmed. But all Aunt Martha did was to shoot the word "Franciscan" through the corner of her mouth in the best gangster tradition. Prue laughed and nodded. So they were staying at the Franciscan and Prue would go down the next day to see them. Bless their sainted old hearts.

They left shortly after ten and everyone, including Mahara, went to the entrance to see them off.

"Well, that's that," said Mort watching the tail-light of the Billingsley car go glittering off. "Now we know what she looks like anyhow. I'm glad that suspense is over."

"The suspense, brother, is just beginning," said Don. "Three guesses what she'll do with the place."

"All right," said Mort. "So she'll turn it into a day nursery and we lose our jobs. I'm worse off than you are. You can go around to a dozen other night clubs and take pictures but how many can I find to manage at the drop of a hat? I'll have to go back to Chicago, and who wants to go back anywhere once they've lived out here?" He walked back into the main room with his shoulders slumped and his hands thrust into his pockets.

Don walked back whistling. And Prue walked back watching both of them.

At her shoulder Mahara said softly, "The nice old maid—yes? It is so good that an old maid owns this place. You think so too?"

Prue turned and looked at her. "What on earth do you mean by that?" she asked.

But Mahara just laughed and puckered up her mouth.

CHAPTER VI

PRUDENCE'S PROGRESS

NEXT morning when Prue got up she called the Franciscan. The girl at the switchboard rang the aunts' room and Aunt Susan answered.

"We expected you to call earlier," she said sternly. Aunt Susan was still smarting over this masquerade deal.

Prue said gently, "I'm sorry but I couldn't call before." She never would dare tell Aunt Susan she'd just gotten up and the hands of the clock tipped at eleven. Aunt Susan, who never slept past six in her whole New England life would never understand or condone such laziness. "May I come down?" asked Prue meekly. "I'm so anxious to see you!"

"You could have seen us last night if you hadn't gotten Martha to lie for you. Yes. Come down." The receiver clicked with the same snap that had been in Aunt Susan's tone and Prue hung up. Bless their hearts! Stern and hard as the granite coast of Maine itself, and

[*Turn page*]

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sweet as the breath of fern that blew across the Cape, tart as the cranberries that shone jewel-like in the bogs and honest as stark rocks that concealed nothing. Prue loved her aunts and she loved the country that had produced them.

She phoned for a cab and went to the Franciscan but just as the driver slid to the curb in front of the great cream colored pile Prue stared, gasped and froze in the seat.

Just ahead of them, just sliding to the curb too was a most familiar car with two very familiar people in it. Aunt Martha and Don in Don's Cadillac.

For a long minute Prue couldn't move. She just stared at them. Aunt Martha got out, leaning on Don's gallantly held hand and she smiled up at him.

"Thank you very much, Don," she said primly, "for a most enjoyable morning. I've always wanted to see where Indians lived and now I have." So he'd taken her out to Isleta too. How nice! Don the Don Juan dancing attendance on all the ladies. Prue clamped her teeth on suddenly trembling lips and felt the burn of tears behind her eyes.

Anger rolled up suddenly and she yanked at her bag to open it and pay the cab driver. By the time she'd done it, Don had driven off and Aunt Martha had gone into the hotel. Prue followed her slowly.

Of course, she thought bitterly as she stepped into the elevator, she ought to be very satisfied and pleased with herself. Because this was exactly why she'd asked Aunt Martha to use her name for awhile. She'd wanted to see what Don would do. Well, she'd seen. Don had let no grass grow under his feet. He must have waked Aunt Martha up to take her out and blarney her at the earliest possible opportunity.

Prue realized now, in the leaden hurt of disappointment, how much she'd hoped that Don would somehow prove that he wasn't what he'd seemed to be. Well, she had proof all right but it wasn't the kind she had wanted.

She stepped out of the elevator at the aunt's floor, and then she stopped. She couldn't talk sensibly to them as upset as she was, and she certainly didn't want to see Aunt Martha, probably all glowing and simpering like a schoolgirl, fresh from her wonderful morning with Don. No, that Prue couldn't take. So she turned around and went down in the elevator again and out into the street.

She went to a phone outside the hotel and phoned Aunt Susan.

"I'm sorry," she said as coolly as she could for the knot in her throat. "I've been delayed and I can't get there for awhile. I'll try to come in about an hour." Maybe by that time she'd get used to the idea that Don was really out for only Don. She'd thought she'd accepted it and been sure but she hadn't been. So now she had to do it all over again.

"Very well," snapped Aunt Susan. "If you come this afternoon I shall be here but your Aunt Martha won't. She's going gallivanting—at her age!"

"I see," said Prue and hung up slowly.

But in a minute she took the receiver down again and dropped in another nickel. She had to talk to someone. She had to try to get her mind off this thing.

"Hello?" said Mort's voice.

"Oh, Mort; I'm so glad you were there. I'm down town."

"Want me to come for you?"

"Yes! Yes, would you? Is there some place I can go to wait for you? Where will you meet me?"

Mort's voice tightened. "Is something wrong? You sound funny."

"No," said Prue. "Nothing's wrong. I—I haven't had breakfast yet. That's all." She hoped he believed her.

He apparently did. "All right. Then go to the Alvarado and order. I'll meet you there."

HE GOT there almost as soon as she did and he bent over her, his eyes adoring.

"You're more beautiful every time I look at you," he murmured. He sat down opposite her slowly, his eyes still full of worship. "Do you know I love you?" he asked softly.

She met his eyes and the love in them comforted her.

"It is good to be loved," she said gently.

He leaned forward. Across the table he reached for her hands.

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"Does that mean there's a chance for me?" His voice was bright and quick with eagerness. "Does that mean you'll marry me?" His hands were warm on hers and doubt was like a see-saw in her mind. Should she marry him? A sensible, loveless, companionable marriage with her keeping the ownership of Peacock and Mort managing it in continued success? She'd fire Don, get him out of her life completely and forget she'd ever seen him.

She smiled at Mort and some of the doubt went out of her eyes. It would be by far the most sensible thing to do.

Mort said jubilantly, "You're going to do it! You're going to marry me! And listen to what I'm going to do. I'm going to butter up that old maid who owns the joint and see what I can do with her. You know—a little love, a few soft words here and there, and who knows what she'll do for me? I bet—" His words sliced off as Prue, snatching her hand from his, cracked his cheek with the palm of her furious hand.

"Get this straight!" Her words cracked too. "*I'm* Prudence Adams. I got an idea something was very dirty around that place and I took another name till I found out. So I've found out. You'd lie and deceive and butter up anybody to get something for yourself. And so would Don. Maybe that's what the night club business does to people—I don't know. But I want none of it. If you can *buy* the Fan-tailed Peacock, fine. I'll sell it to you. And the price will be something very fancy because I've been around you long enough to catch on. I'm the only one who matters to me. And remember—*I'm* Prudence Adams, and the lady you just referred to as the old maid who owns the joint is my Aunt Martha. And I doubt if buttering her up would get you anywhere. She's too smart."

Prue went out then, out of the dining room and across the hotel lobby and out the door into the street. She got a cab and she went to the Franciscan. She found her aunt's room and she went in without knocking. Aunt Susan was reading a travel pamphlet and Aunt Martha was fixing her nails. They both turned startled faces.

"Well!" snapped Susan. "Walking in without knocking. You weren't brought up to do things like that."

Aunt Martha smiled gently. "She's upset, sister," she murmured.

Prue said, "I should think I am upset. I hate that night club! I hate people!"

"I've sold the night club for you," said Aunt Martha. "That is, of course, if you agree."

"Sold it!" Prue's mind spun. All the things Mort had said surged through her mind. Her eyes blazed. "And I suppose you've sold it to that red-headed snide who got to you first! I suppose he soft-soaped you into giving him a good tidy little bargain! Well, it won't hold with me. I'll jack up the price till nobody can touch it, unless I'm sure they're not getting the best of me."

"Are you through?" asked Aunt Martha. For the first time in a long while she looked stern. "Jumping to conclusions is a trait you get from your mother's side of the family, not ours," she said tightly. "The person I have to buy the night club does not have red hair. And if by that term you refer to Don Haven, I may tell you that he has left town. He gave me to understand that he had had a most unhappy love affair. He fell in love with a girl who refused to trust him and accused him, I gather, of dreadful things like dishonesty and deceit—tch, tch! How anybody with eyes in her head could believe that nice, straight-forward, clear-eyed boy was dishonest I don't see, but all girls are fools."

"Yes," said Prue. "I guess they are." She felt blank and hopeless. Don had gone. He'd left. He was really out of her life now. And she'd lost him because she'd been a doubting, suspicious little fool. She said, "Where did he go to?" And then, "I thought he was just being nice to me because he—wanted the club."

"Humph!" snorted Aunt Martha. "I'll show you who wants the club!" And, snatching Prue's hand, she went out the door and down the corridor.

GOING down in the elevator nobody said anything and Aunt Martha was still gripping Prue's hand when they got out.

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"There she is!" cried Aunt Martha.

"Mahara!" gasped Prue.

Mahara, beautiful and sure, rose from a high backed chair and came toward them.

"You have decided to sell to me?" she asked in her clipped assumed accent.

Prue said, "You're really going to buy the club, Mahara? What for?"

"Because," said Mahara simply, "if I have the club, Mort will marry me. Mort will marry anybody who has something he wants—and I want Mort."

"Good—glory!" gasped Prue. And then she said, "Of course you can have the club. Aunt Martha will get in touch with Mr. Billingsley."

"It's almost train time," said Aunt Martha quietly.

"Train time?" Prue looked at her. "What do you mean, train time? Who's going away?"

"Don is," said Aunt Martha. "I told him if you had any final message for him that I'd tell you to send it to the train and— Goodness!" she ended mildly, smiling at Mahara, "she went fast, didn't she?"

The train was in—a long silver and crimson dragon—when Prue dashed up the steps to the platform.

"Don!" she yelled. But no one was in sight but a straggling group of townspeople—and the train would be moving in a minute. The porters were taking in the steps. "Wait—wait!" screamed Prue and jumped onto the high steps.

"Miss!" cried the porter. "Miss! Miss, we're pulling out!"

"I can't help it," called Prue and dodged into a car. She ran through them calling, "Don! Don!" And everybody looked at her but she didn't even see them.

Then, suddenly, Don was standing in the aisle in front of her. His hair was a torch. His eyes were lamps.

"Don!" She was in his arms and suddenly she was sobbing. "I've been such a fool, Don! Can you ever forgive me? Oh—Don!"

He held her and he laid his cheek against her hair. "Aunt Martha said she'd fix it," he murmured. "Your Aunt Martha's a very smart woman. She knew by the way you looked at me that you loved me and she called me this morning to come down and tell her what was wrong. She said— Prue!" his tone was suddenly shocked, "She was right, wasn't she? You do love me—don't you?"

Prue lifted a tear stained face, "What do you think?" she asked.

And the train began to move.

But neither of them knew it because Don was kissing her and there'd always be time to think of such prosaic, sensible things as what they'd do with Prue without a reservation and how soon they could be married so this could be turned into a honeymoon.

But for just now Don's kissing her was enough.

Share that—

ENCHANTED MOMENT

with Ann Lawson in the fascinating novelet

By PEGGY GADDIS

NEXT ISSUE!

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Here's what befell Sally when Cupid upset her plans!

Sally noticed that the young man was tall, dark and handsome

Your Heart's Showing

By SHELBY STEGER

SALLY ALLISON ran through the sudden pelting rain and darted into the shelter of a shop doorway. She was drenched! The crisp black organdy, on which she had sat with such care all day at the office, clung to her as if she had just been rescued from drowning. What had been a huge cartwheel of a hat now hung around her dejected face like a dust cap.

Henry would be furious!

Sally began to cry. She had sobbed

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drearily for perhaps half a minute when the glass door behind her was flung open.

"Kindly cry inside," commanded a deep male voice. "If I had any business, you'd drive it away."

Through her tears Sally noticed that the glass door bore discreet gilt letters saying: JACQUES—GOWNS, and that the young man who held it open was tall, dark and probably handsome when he wasn't scowling so ferociously. Meekly she stepped in.

"The rich-looking gray carpet on which you're dripping so copiously isn't paid for yet, so if you don't mind, come drip in the workroom on the linoleum." Sally followed him through the smartly decorated little shop. "You see, the linoleum isn't paid for either."

FROM a table on which were a clutter of pipes, tobacco, drawing pencils, scraps of bright fabrics, pins, erasers, and sketches of gowns and suits, the young man took a thermos and poured coffee.

"Drink this. Haven't you heard of umbrellas? Or taxis?"

"I lose umbrellas," Sally confessed unhappily, sipping the hot coffee. "And I paid so much for my dress and hat that I can't afford lunches till payday, much less taxis." Her face crumpled and her large blue eyes welled dangerously. "Henry will be simply furious," she wailed.

"I doubt that you'll ever be thoroughly dry, but let's start with the eyes." He handed her a handkerchief. "I'm Jack Jones, otherwise Jacques, dress designer. I was an architect, but I'm doing this till building materials are more plentiful. In designing the larger sizes, I find a knowledge of stresses and strains rather useful." He pushed a chair near her. "Sit down and tell me about Henry and his unbridled fury."

Sally introduced herself and accepted the chair.

"Henry's my boss. We just got engaged last week and tonight I'm to meet his parents and a few of their friends." She sniffed and wiped her eyes. "Henry's terribly critical about a girl's appearance. He begged me to be sure my slip wasn't showing and that my seams were straight. I looked rather nice until I got rained on."

Jack Jones' wide mouth tilted slightly. "And why wasn't Henry available to escort you, dry and beautiful, to his home?"

"Henry plays golf in the afternoons and leaves me in charge of his law office." She smiled. "He hasn't been an attorney long, so there isn't much for me to do, but I can't leave till five."

"For some obscure reason I dislike Henry, but I sympathize with his lack of business." A harried look crossed Mr. Jones' good-looking face. "If I don't get some business by the first, which is all too soon, the bank will have to worry about who pays for the carpets."

"Henry doesn't worry about business. All the Tilleys are fabulously wealthy." She rose. "Well, I'll go home and try to find something dry." She sighed. "I did want to look perfect for once."

"You're engaged to Henry Tilley?" Jack Jones was gazing at her incredulously. "*The* Henry Tilley?"

Sally nodded her damp head, on which coppery curls were springing. She could understand Mr. Jones' amazement. She herself could hardly believe her luck. Wonderful, blond ruddy Henry! He was so masterful, so clever, so well-groomed, so Society!

She was pretty, but she was an orphan, utterly without background. Furthermore, no matter how careful she was, spontaneous runs appeared in her hose, she forgot for hours at a time to powder her pert nose, and she could usually depend on a half-inch of lacy slip to be peeping from beneath her hem. It was a shame. She tried so hard to deserve Henry.

"Henry Tilley! The International Set, polo, Bar Harbor! Cafe society!" Jack Jones chanted bemusedly. "Luck and I are just like that!" Excitedly he displayed two crossed fingers to Sally.

"Yes. Well, thanks, and I'll go now." Nervously she edged toward the door. This young man wasn't quite—right!

"No, stay, bless you! Something always happens at the last minute to save my neck. Miss Lili! Bring 'Fine Feathers'," Jack Jones shouted and fixed Sally with a glittering dark eye. "Look, Sally Allison, I'm going to dress you."

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"You—are?" Wide-eyed, Sally backed away.

"Oh, not personally. Don't be alarmed." He laughed, with a flash of even white teeth. "Look, I'll dress you up. You sashay around, with great poise and chic, among the Tilleys and their expensive friends. All you have to do is remark casually, at opportune moments, that you buy all your clothes at Jacques."

"It's awfully nice of you, but I couldn't possibly afford—"

"This is advertising. It won't cost you a penny, and it may mean that I don't lose my business." He grinned. "Besides, the clothes will look much prettier on you than on the president of the bank."

Mr. Jones withdrew. Confused and a little frightened by the saleswoman, Miss Lili, who wore robin's-egg-blue hair and a look of hauteur, Sally allowed herself to be dressed in the costume called Fine Feathers. It wouldn't hurt her, she guessed, to do this good looking though impulsive young man a favor.

NEVER before having encountered a butler outside the movies, Sally was relieved to see Henry close at the butler's heels.

Swiftly his light brown eyes swept over her. "You went home to change. You're late."

"I'm sorry," she faltered, and then was reminded, in the hall mirror, how pretty she looked. Fine Feathers was a slim gray crepe dress. The bodice drapery was caught up with a *frou* of bronze *cocque* feathers where a less imaginative designer would have pinned an orchid. The hat, a mere scrap of gray crepe, was trimmed with the same bronze feathers. She looked marvelous!

"I'm sorry," she repeated with a sidelong smile, a flirt of her long lashes, "but I'm sure you'll forgive me, Henry." This dress made her feel marvelous!

"Your slip—" Henry murmured, and oh, no! she thought in dismay. "Your slip is not showing." Henry squeezed her hand in approval.

Sally laughed in relief. "But of course not, darling," she exclaimed as they entered the drawing-room. "I buy all my frocks at Jacques, you know." She was a trifle abashed to see the group waiting to meet her turn their interested gaze upon her. Jack Jones would have been pleased, she thought giddily, at her entrance line.

Henry presented Sally to his parents. Mr. Tilley was a pleasant, vague, small man who smiled a great deal and said little. Mrs. Tilley was tall and stately, with a crown of graying hair above her severe face with its ice-blue eyes, its aristocratic nose, tight mouth and firm jawline.

"So this is Sally," said Mrs. Tilley in chipped tones, as one who says "So this is Typhoid Mary." "Well."

"I'll leave you to get acquainted," said Henry cravenly and made for the bar.

There was a pause, during which Sally tried to think of something she might say in her favor. Since all that occurred was "I can type one hundred and fifty words a minute," she remained silent; it didn't seem the sort of thing that would impress Mrs. Tilley.

"This," said Mrs. Tilley, coming out of her revery and turning to a girl sitting next her, "is Helene Jergens, our very dear friend."

Sally and Helene simpered politely. Helene had brown hair, immense gray eyes and a sweet, controlled mouth. Her figure was as slender and attractive as Sally's own, but it was obscured by an unfortunate dress of olive-green taffeta, which had a decidedly homemade look.

"Helene lives next door. She and Henry were brought up together. We had always hoped—" Mrs. Tilley sighed, patted Helene's hand, and smiled bravely. "Well, perhaps it will all work out. Perhaps—"

Sally wondered if, when she became Mrs. Henry Tilley and more used to this rarefied atmosphere, she would achieve the knack of being so regally rude as Mrs. Tilley. She hoped not.

After dinner, during which Helene kept her wistfully adoring gaze on Henry, and Mrs. Tilley watched Sally as if alert to discover her either eating with her knife or pocketing same, Helene questioned Sally in the drawing-room.

"Your dress is so pretty," she ad-

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mired with evident sincerity. "Where did you say you get your things?"

"At Jacques." Sally gave her the address. "He's terribly clever."

"I'll call on him tomorrow." Helene's eyes followed Henry and she seemed to be promising herself something. "I'll never let Mother's dressmaker sew another stitch on me."

As Henry drove Sally home, she murmured, "Helene seems nice."

"Mm hmm. Known her all her life. Like a sister to me," he said carelessly. "Nice enough, but dowdy. No style."

"She's in love with you," Sally mused to herself, "and I've got you. Poor Helene."

"You looked charming tonight." Henry kissed her rewardingly. "I was most pleased with you."

"Oh, thank you, Henry," Sally said humbly, and vowed gratefully that never again would her slip show. Not even when she was Mrs. Tilley and could afford real lace!

ADROITLY, Jack Jones advised across the restaurant dinner table next night: "Relax. This is a business engagement. You're not being unfaithful to the estimable Henry at all."

"Of course I'm not." Sally wished that Mr. Jones would not be quite so humorous about Henry. "I wouldn't have stopped by your shop except to return the dress."

"It's yours, as I told you. More, too." He quirked a jaunty eyebrow at her. "The Miss Jergens you sent in ordered a complete wardrobe. When her check arrives tomorrow I shall sneer at the bank. A few more customers like that and I'll show a profit."

It seemed in questionable taste, Sally pondered, this thing of accepting Jack Jones' offer of dresses. But Henry was so critical. Being used to wealth it didn't seem to occur to him how difficult it was for a girl to dress the way he wanted her to, on a secretary's salary. And one could hardly ask one's fiance for a raise.

"After I'm married I'll buy all my clothes from you," Sally promised warmly. It made her feel better about now.

"Fine." He had a very nice smile. "And now let's dance."

Henry did many things well, but his dancing was uninspired. Jack was a much better dancer, Sally thought with mild disloyalty, and proceeded to enjoy herself. She could relax with Jack and it was pleasant after the worried tenseness which always gripped her when she was exposed to the perfection which was Henry.

She thought, for a startled moment at her door, that Jack was going to kiss her. More startling, she discovered that she might have let him.

"Good night," she said in haste and scurried within her door. She was positively flighty, she thought in shocked self-condemnation. She really didn't deserve Henry Tilley!

Attending an evening party with Henry, Sally was astounded to discover how beautiful Helene was in a smoke-blue chiffon from Jacques. She was astounded and alarmed when, from the vantage point of her own partner's arms, she watched Helene and Henry waltz slowly past. Henry was smiling down into Helene's eyes and she smiled dreamily back.

Each seemed oblivious of everything but each other.

Lose Henry to the girl-next-door, the girl Mrs. Tilley had always meant for her son? No! She would not allow the security, the prestige, she had craved all her lonely life to slip through her fingers.

Besides, Sally told herself somewhat tardily, she loved Henry. Of course she loved Henry.

When Henry delivered her at her door, she spoke with unaccustomed firmness. "I'd like to be married soon, Henry."

"Yes, of course." Henry moved his shoulders uneasily. "Whenever you say, my dear."

"Week after next," Sally decided swiftly. "Wednesday." It was as good a day as any.

He nodded. "Wednesday, then." His eyes thoughtful, Henry kissed Sally somewhat absently. She responded dutifully and he left.

There, she thought with satisfaction. That takes care of my future. Helene can meet lots of rich men. She's on her own.

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SLOWLY, Jack nodded his handsome dark head. "Pink," he said. "Shell pink, the palest pearl-tone." He threw down his sketching pencil. "It will be very pretty."

"Pink, with my hair?" Sally, seated next him on her sofa, craned to see the sketch of her bridal gown.

"The right pink is grand—on the right redhead." His dark eyes seemed to twinkle as they met her blue ones. "So you're going to marry your rich boy."

"Certainly," Sally said huffily. "Why not?"

"Lots of reasons." Jack grinned wisely. "Something tells me that a girl who is an orphan is apt to be dazzled by the Tilley background, that any girl is apt to be dazzled by the Tilley money. You think Henry's a masterful, compelling sort of chap. Mind you, I've never met him, but, being prejudiced, I think he's stuffy, selfish and pompous. You think that—"

"Never mind what I think!" Sally's cheeks blazed hotly.

Jack reached out suddenly and took her in his arms. "Silly Sally," he whispered, "don't you know I love you?"

He kissed her, his mouth hard and bruising on hers. Blissfully she listened to the mad thudding of her heart, felt it turn and float like a cloud, felt her blood tingle in her veins like champagne. When Henry kissed her, she thought dizzily, she felt as she imagined a baby might when it was kissed by a politician. But this was different. This was—

Suddenly she sat upright. "That's a d-dirty trick," she stammered, and her lids smarted with tears. "That's not fair."

"In love or war," Jack shrugged. "Sally, will you marry me?"

"No," she cried in panic. "No!"

"Say 'I love Henry Tilley,'" he dared her unmercifully.

"I l—" She swallowed painfully. "I'm going to marry Henry Tilley!"

Jack sauntered to the door. "Don't forget I'm shot with luck," he said. "Well, see you at the wedding."

"You're coming to my wedding?"

"Certainly. Not Henry's, though.—'Night, precious."

Sally gazed wildly at the just-shut door, threw a shoe at it and burst into tears. Darn Jack Jones for confusing her just when everything was going right!

IT WAS Tuesday. Helene Jergens was giving a huge afternoon party for Sally and Henry, who would be, this time tomorrow, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Tilley. She should be very happy, Sally brooded, staring into her cocktail.

She was very happy. She had everything she wanted, personified by Henry, who stood across the room, rugged and substantial as a bank, talking to Helene. Helene wore a prim but smart brown lace dress, from Jacques, and she seemed to glow as her gray eyes devoured Henry. Let her have her fun, thought Sally doggedly—tomorrow's my day.

She set her glass down and rose to join Henry. She felt extremely chic in the pale yellow dress with its tiny bustle. It had arrived this morning, with the froth of pink wedding dress, and tucked in its yellow folds was a note in Jack's hand, saying "Henry will like this one."

Henry frowned at Sally's approach. "Must you humiliate me before everyone?" he enquired icily. "Your slip's showing."

Despairingly Sally peered over her shoulder. "I'm sorry," she said meekly. She turned to go find a maid and a safety pin, then halted.

Why should Henry humiliate her before Helene? It was indubitably an untidy habit, but was it a crime for one's slip to show? If so, it was one she would very likely be guilty of many times.

All at once the prospect of a future devoted to worrying about it, and cringing from Henry's ire when the crime inevitably occurred, seemed very bleak and unattractive.

She faced Henry. "No," she told him. "You can't bully me any more."

She stared into his startled, rage-flushed face, then burst into laughter. "I never noticed it before, but you always look like your collar's too tight," she gasped helplessly. "It would never work. You're so dismally perfect. No matter how hard I tried my slip would

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show, and then—" she giggled weakly —you'd have to divorce me."

She slipped her ring from her finger and handed it to Henry. "Take over from here, will you, Helene?" She smiled at Helene, in whose eyes a vast joy was dawning. "You and I are going to make Mrs. Tilley awfully happy."

PAUSING on the sidewalk, Sally looked at her watch—ten past five. If she hurried she could catch Jack before he closed the shop.

Suddenly the dark skies opened and it poured, with all of springtime's mad abandon. Sally swore a small ladylike curse and ran—

"Kindly cry inside," invited a deep male voice. "The carpet's paid for now, so please drip in the workroom as usual."

"I'm not crying." Drenched, Sally brushed past Jack to hurry to the workroom with its mopable floor. "Well, you might look surprised to see me."

"Oh, I knew you'd be here. Luck and I are just like that." He crossed his fingers and gave her a curious smile. "Don't tell me that you and Henry have parted!"

"Naturally. After the slip you designed for me, you rat," Sally said sternly. "The one with the nice little built-in dip in back."

"Oh, that one!" Jack shrugged. "Got to help luck along sometimes."

"Well, it was a very unkind thing to do," Sally complained. "What if I had been really in love with Henry? My heart would be broken now."

"But you weren't." Jack advanced on Sally. "And it isn't."

"I merely came to cancel an order for a wedding dress," she said, retreating just slowly enough.

"No cancellation—it's already been delivered. Anyway, you're going to need it." He took her in his arms and looked deeply, seriously into her eyes. "Silly Sally, don't you know I love you?"

Sally nodded. "Listen— 'I love Jack Jones,' " she said, very distinctly. "I can say that, darling," she whispered, and turned her soft mouth up to his.

Station L-O-V-E

LITTLE known is the fact that every time a person dances the rhumba he or she is executing steps that were primarily designed to be part of a matrimonial dance. The Cuban peasants who originated them, meant them to represent common farm tasks, which the couple would perform together thereafter. Some depict shoeing a mare. Others portray climbing a rope.

OUR favorite movie star of the month is Mary Hatcher, who appears as Mickey Rooney's love interest in "The Big Wheel," United Artists' new film release about the Indianapolis auto race classic. Abounding in romance and sports action, "The Big Wheel" is an excellent movie for all the family—and you'll adore Mary Hatcher!

VERY expensive was an elaborate wedding which took place recently in New York City. A "minor" item on the "budget" went to a florist, who was commissioned to tint a mass of white chrysanthemums to a delectable pink, so that the blossoms would match the icing on the cake. Tinting cost—$2,000.

EVEN though bright orange is not always fashionable, more women who are in love should wear it, according to color psychology experts. They claim that this hue helps to encourage men to pop that all-important question: "Will you marry me?"

—*Mark Knight.*

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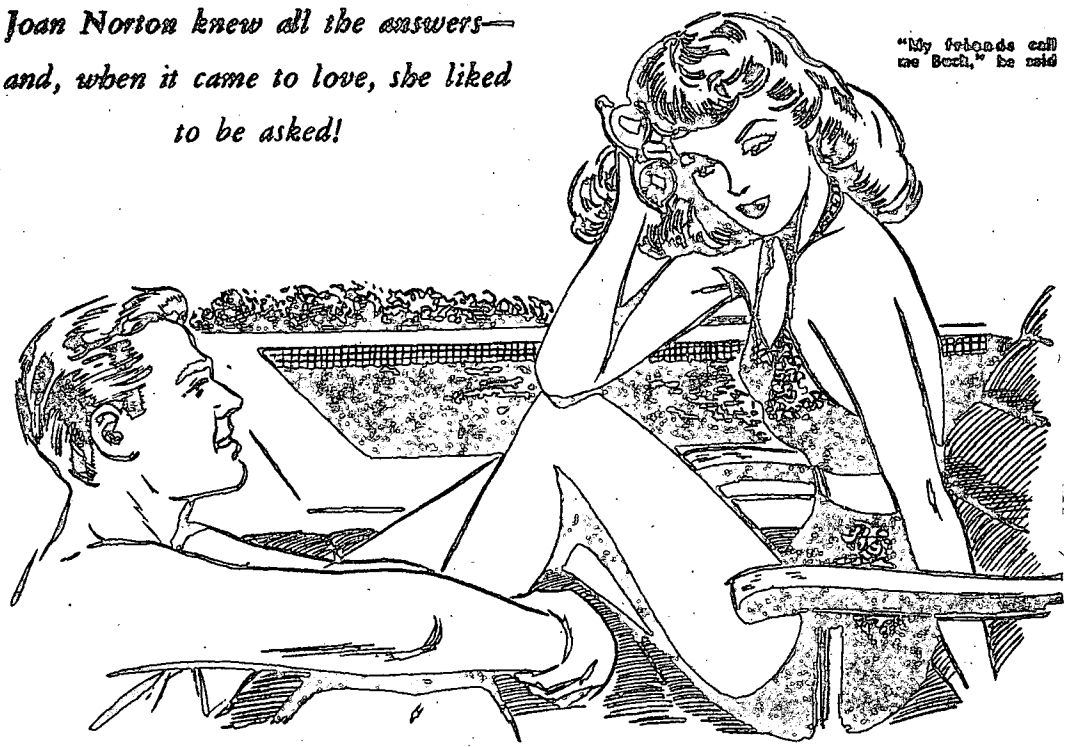
Joan Norton knew all the answers—and, when it came to love, she liked to be asked!



Precious to Her Heart

by RUTH ANDERSON

JOAN NORTON appeared quite serene, blond and lovely as she sat on the edge of the swimming pool at the beach club in Rye. She was nicely tanned and the green shorts and halter she wore were impishly revealing—though she was sure that even if anyone looked closely, they wouldn't even suspect her heart was completely broken.

"I hate men!" Joan announced suddenly to no one in particular. "Not one of them can be trusted."

"So glad that doesn't include me," said a masculine voice from inside the pool. "After all I am just a boy at heart."

The voice wasn't at all familiar, but there was something fascinating about it. Joan looked in the direction of the pool. She had been lying back in a deck chair, gazing at the blue sky above Long Island Sound, when she had voiced her opinion of the male animal aloud.

She blinked and looked again, for she had the confused impression that she was gazing at a blond viking in a wet swim suit. The man who had spoken was a stranger, and in Joan's estimation, just too handsome to be true.

"I could get someone to introduce us," he said. "Since we are both members of this club in good standing, but that would take time. Minutes during which I would be without the radiance of your smile, the music of your voice."

"Mammy!" said Joan. She fluttered her dark lashes over her blue eyes. "How you do talk!"

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"No interruptions, please," he said sternly. "You are Joan Norton and I am Brooks Stockton Mayfield."

"All three of them?" Joan asked.

HE FROWNED. "My friends call me—"

"Don't let me detain you," Joan hastily interrupted. "I wouldn't keep you from your friends for the world. You run right along, Brooksy boy."

"A little more of this routine and I'm either going to kiss you or kill you," Brooks said. "They warned me about you. 'Now there's Joan Norton,' they said, 'She's pretty, she's charming, but she is also a pain in the neck'."

"And who told you that?" asked Joan.

"Just a couple of poor saps whose hearts you broke," Brooks said. "Tom Blake and Matt Tilford to be exact."

"Oh!" Joan said blankly.

Tom Blake, always hanging around giving her the big brother act, had never even hinted to Joan that he loved her. Matt Tilford, on the other hand, was the man who had broken her heart. Just last night she had had one of her many dates with Matt. She was quite convinced she was madly in love with him and had decided that if he asked her to marry him, she would accept. And what had happened? Matt had told her he was going to marry Sue Collinson, and expected her to find that ample reason for dancing in the streets.

She had been very brave. She probably would have hidden her broken heart up her sleeve if she had been wearing sleeves. It had all been so sad and dramatic. The man she loved telling her that he was going to marry another woman while they ate hot dogs at a drivein on the outskirts of New Rochelle. That the mustard on her hot dog had burned her tongue only increased the irony of it all.

That had been yesterday and this was tomorrow and here was a stranger with the improbable name of Brooks Stockton Mayfield telling her that Tom and Matt had warned him against her. She had a feeling that the Messrs. Blake, Tilford and Mayfield deserved a lesson they would never forget. Joan suspected she was just the girl to give it to them.

"Sit down and tell me more, Brooksy boy," she said, giving him her sweetest smile. Naturally any girl just loves to know why she is considered a pain in the neck. It is such an inspiration to the old morale."

"Forget the Brooksy boy stuff," he said. "My friends call me Buck."

"How quaint," said Joan. "Buck sounds like a cowboy name and you don't remind me of the wild and wooly west at all."

He seated himself on the cement beside her chair. She saw Matt Tilford step out to the edge of the high board at the far end of the pool—dark, strong faced and husky. She took a good look and to her surprise there was not the slightest flutter in her heart. She expected to grow weak with the sorrow of her smashed love, but she felt quite healthy. It was a bit disappointing.

Matt did a graceful one and a half gainer and disappeared beneath the surface of the pool. He also disappeared from the surface of Joan's mind as she turned her attention to the man sitting beside her.

"Where do you live, Buck?" she asked.

"In Pelham Manor," Buck said. "We just bought a house there and were we lucky to get it."

"We?" said Joan.

"Mother, Dad, Sis and myself," said Buck. "I'm a junior member of Dad's law firm in town."

"We'll have to find an apartment in New York after we're married," Joan said dreamily.

"Huh?" Buck stared at her with his mouth open. He didn't look quite as handsome as usual.

Abruptly Matt pulled himself up on the edge of the pool without apparently noticing they were there. He sat with his back to them, his feet dangling in the water, but Joan was sure he was close enough to hear every word they said. That suited her fine.

"Who is this *we* you are talking about?" Buck asked anxiously.

"Why us of course, silly," said Joan. "Didn't you say you couldn't bear being away from the radiance of my smile and the music of my voice, even for minutes?"

"Sure," said Buck. "But—" he broke off confusedly.

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"But what, darling?" Joan asked.

SHE was having a lovely time, and she decided to lay it on even thicker. With Brooks Stockton Mayfield squirming like a trapped eel, and Matt Tilford listening with both ears she felt the results might be very interesting.

"Don't tell me you didn't mean it, Buck," she said in what she hoped was a nice blending of hope and despair. "After all those dates I had with you in town. The dinners in the little candle-lighted restaurants, the night you told me you loved me and asked me to marry you."

"Then which I did when," said Buck dazedly. "I mean the when I did which?"

"The night you proposed," Joan said. "Don't tell me you have forgotten."

"Sure I've forgotten." Buck rose to his feet and stood glaring at her. "You're crazy as a loon. I never had any dates with you in town—never even met you before today—and I certainly didn't ask you to marry me."

"Just a minute, Mayfield." Matt got up quickly and advanced toward the other man. "I couldn't help overhearing what you just said to Miss Norton, and what she said to you. I didn't like you saying she is crazy, and practically calling her a liar. I've known Joan a long time and I'm sure she wouldn't make up a story like that."

"I still say that I never met her until today," said Buck firmly. "So this business of my proposing to her is just impossible."

"Maybe we had better talk this over privately," said Matt. "Come back to the men's dressing room with me, Mayfield."

"Willingly," said Buck.

Joan felt guilty as they walked away without even looking back at her. She was sure that as soon as they were out of sight in the men's dressing rooms of the club, they would come to blows. It had amused her to pretend that Buck had proposed and to talk about it while Matt was listening. But she certainly hadn't expected her devilish chit-chat to result in a fist-fight between the two men.

"When you cook up a mess you don't fool about it, do you, baby," a masculine voice said from behind her. "You sure gave the boys a lovely sleigh ride in July."

Even before she looked she recognized Tom Blake's voice. It was with a feeling of relief that she found he was near, that he evidently knew just what she had done. She peered around the edge of her chair and saw him get up from another beach chair that had been in back of her own.

Evidently he had been there all of the time and heard every word that had been said.

"Oh, Tom," she said. "I didn't mean to really start any trouble, but when Buck told me that you and Matt had told him I was a pain in the neck, I just had some wild idea of teaching all three of you a lesson."

"We didn't say it, Joan." Tom was dressed in slacks, a sport shirt, and slip on moccasins. "I haven't said more than two or three words to Mayfield since I first met him a week ago, and I'll bet Matt hasn't either. We wouldn't say that about you anyway. Mayfield thought that one up all by himself."

As he stood there Joan realized how much Tom Blake meant to her. How much he had always meant to her. They had been next door neighbors in Pelham Manor ever since Tom had been thirteen and she had been eight. All through the years he had been like an older brother to her, and the fact she was an only child had made her appreciate him all the more.

It was always Tom to whom she brought her troubles, for after talking them over with him, they had never seemed so awesomely mountainous. But now she couldn't quite understand why just the sight of him standing there made her heart beat faster. Why he no longer seemed like a big brother at all, but someone far more precious to her heart.

"All the same, that stuff about having all those dates with Mayfield in town and his proposing to you was pretty wild, Joan," Tom said. "For a girl of twenty-one you're still such a crazy kid." He shook his head in mock resignation. "Sometimes I could give you a good licking. I would too—if I didn't love you so much."

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Joan stared at him, eyes wide with surprise.

"Love me, Tom? But I thought we were just pals."

"Huh?" Tom said. "You didn't expect me to stick my neck out when I was sure you were in love with Matt and he was in love with you. He told me about his marrying Sue Collison in a few weeks. I was so sure he had hurt you terribly, I gave considerable thought to cutting his throat."

"Could you, Tom?" Joan asked softly.

"Sure," Tom said firmly, and then he frowned. "But how about it? Were you in love with Matt?"

"I—I thought so," Joan said honestly. "And when he told me about Sue last night I was sure my heart was broken. I was still sure of it until this afternoon. Then when I saw Matt, I discovered he didn't matter at all." She looked at Tom, her eyes soft. "But you do, darling. I guess you always did and I didn't realize it."

"I'll go back," said Tom suddenly. "I want to see how Matt and Buck got along."

"You needn't bother," said Joan as she glanced at the far end of the pool and saw Buck and Matt appear through a doorway fully dressed. "Apparently there has been no blood spilled, no eyes blackened. In fact no fight." She laughed softly. "I guess they both decided I was an awful liar."

"How about a date tonight?" Tom asked. "There's a question I want to ask you, and this doesn't seem the appropriate time or the place for it."

"Suits me fine," Joan said as she saw Matt and Buck leave the pool without even glancing in her direction. "I hope there's a moon tonight."

"Why?" asked Tom.

"It's always more romantic to become engaged by moonlight," Joan said.

"Shucks," said Tom in pretended disappointment. "You not only know the question, but the answer, darling."

"Maybe," said Joan. "But all the same you ask me tonight."

Love's Quiz

Why does the very sight of you,
Bring rapture to my eyes?
And why does everything you do,
Seem wonderful and wise?

Why am I happy when you're near?
What dreams invade my sleep?
If you should know the answers, dear,
My heart is yours to keep!

—HELEN ARDSLEY

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Moonmist for Mary

"You were working against odds," said Danny

By DOROTHY DANIELS

Vivacious Mary rivals languorous Linnette for a job—and a man!

ANGRY verbal static crackled through the closed door of the private office and swirled electrically around the desks of the big outer room. Benjamin Castle, president of Moonmist, Incorporated, makers of stylish frocks and gowns for mademoiselle, was broadcasting stormily. Gradually the noises of the big room died away. The clickety-clicking of the vari-

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ous machines ceased as the girls turned to regard Mary Miller who occupied a rear desk.

Mary was the firm's chief file clerk. Of medium height, slender, with smoky gray eyes deeply set in a round face, she felt her color rise. They knew her interest in Danny Brown was more than casual, and it was Danny who was receiving the full benefit of Mr. Castle's anger, even though the cause of it all was Linnette Fern—the concern's top model. That's why the looks Mary was getting seemed to say, "When are you going to get wise to yourself?"

For Danny was in love with Linnette, who had never given any inclination that his affection was returned. Linnette tolerated Danny, at least in the opinion of the girls in the office, because he had a gay, happy-go-lucky personality. He was tall and moderately good looking. He was an atrocious dresser, however, affecting loud sport jackets and slacks. But he seemed to be welcome in every swanky restaurant and night club, while his friendly manner made him liked by head waiters, customers' buyers and even columnists.

IT WAS this last that intrigued Linnette. Danny had seen to it that her name appeared in one of the daily gossip columns. It would only take a few more such notices before V.I.P. started taking notice. And Very Important People were all that mattered—to Linnette.

She was regally tall, with oval features, petal smooth complexion and large blue eyes. Her walk was almost seductive, her disposition atrocious, and for the past few weeks, her attitude toward her work completely indifferent. All this had happened since she'd been offered modeling work by Starlight Frocks and Gowns, a big and active competitor of Moonmist.

The voices grew louder, Danny's reasoning and pleading, Mr. Castle's adamant and unforgiving.

Linnette was supposed to have come to the firm to be gowned for a luncheon appointment with Mr. Monty Gilson, the buyer of a large Mid-west department store for better dress apparel. Here it was twelve-thirty, and Linnette hadn't made an appearance. Calls to her apartment went unanswered.

Now the door to the inner office flew open. Mr. Castle, short and corpulent, appeared, followed by a worried looking Danny. Mr. Castle gestured toward the typists and office clerks sitting sedately before him, their faces displaying none of the excitement raging through them.

"Look at these girls, Danny," he said. "Any one of them I could take and dress up to look like Linnette."

Instead of looking, Danny started toward the door, saying, "I'll see Monty Gilson and fix it for Linnette to lunch with him tomorrow."

"Come back here," Mr. Castle thundered. "One of these girls is going to lunch with Gilson. Linnette is through at Moonmist."

Danny paled. "Now, Ben, you don't mean that. She's the only one who can get Gilson to come down here and look over the stock."

Mr. Castle's hand made a disdainful motion in the air as he studied the girls closely, but impersonally. His eyes came to rest on Mary Miller.

She felt her heartbeat quicken even before he said, "Miss Miller, come up here, please."

"Yes, Mr. Castle," Mary afiswered, and pretended not to notice Danny's hostile glance.

"Danny, this is Miss Miller," Mr. Castle said. "She's going to be our top model, replacing Linnette."

"Ben, surely you don't think this—" Danny motioned toward Mary, but Mr. Castle already had her arm and was leading her into his office. Reluctantly, Danny followed.

In the office, Mr. Castle motioned Mary to a chair beside his desk. She sat down, fully conscious of Danny's eyes flicking briefly and impersonally along her figure.

His features noncommittal, he asked, "What experience in modeling have you had, Miss Miller?"

Mr. Castle's palm slapped the desk. "What experience does any model need except a figure, a face and a good set of teeth?"

Danny gestured vaguely in the air. "Linnette has more than that. A cer-

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tain—certain something."

"Glamour—that's the certain something," Mr. Castle scoffed. "And she puts it on when she wears our gowns."

Danny attempted another angle. "Of course, you know Starlight Frocks and Gowns have offered Linnette work?"

"They can have her." Mr. Castle pointed a finger at Danny. "I'll hear no more about Linnette. If I'm not afraid to take a chance on Miss Miller, you can stop worrying."

Danny sighed. "Okay. But don't blame me if it fails—as I fully expect it will."

Mary felt a strange stiffening in her spine. Up until this moment, she'd felt waves of weakness whenever Danny passed through the office. Not that he ever knew about it. He wasn't even conscious of her existence. Now, however, she was beginning to agree with the girls. They'd kidded her and told her she was a fool for rising to his defense whenever they criticized Danny. They were right. Danny was mean and spiteful and contemptuous where she was concerned, while he toddled at Linnette's heels like a faithful little poodle dog.

Mary's dark, curly head tilted defiantly and she spoke for the first time, addressing her remarks to Mr. Castle. "I'll do my best. I realize I'm not another Linnette, but I'd like the opportunity to sell our line."

Mr. Castle beamed. "That's the girl. And remember this. Linnette is all looks and nothing up here." He tapped his head. "You look intelligent, you talk that way and you have a nice voice. Soft and ladylike. I'm sure you can convince Gilson he should come here to look over our merchandise."

Mary smiled and glanced at Danny. She got a glare in return.

"Let's get started," he said. "You're lunching at the St. Regis with Monty Gilson. Come with me while I select a frock that will suit you."

"Of course, Mr. Brown." Mary rose and followed him to the door. She nodded a farewell to Mr. Castle, walked through the office and smiled a thank-you at the girls as they surreptitiously raised their clasped hands in a good-luck gesture.

Danny slowed while she caught up with him. He said, "We've no time to be formal," he began. "I have to brief you on what to say to Mr. Gilson. And if you make good," his voice held no conviction, "we'll be working together. So just call me Danny."

"All right—Danny," Mary replied. "I think I might help you on what is best for me as to coloring and style."

THEY were walking through the hallway. Danny paused abruptly, and pivoted to face Mary. With mock humility, he said, "It so happens that Mr. Castle relies on my good taste. Will you favor me by doing likewise?"

"If I agree with what you select." Mary's eyes flicked briefly over his apparel.

"Well—" Danny's manner was belligerent.

Mary's brows raised. "I was just thinking—your clothes don't inspire too much confidence in me. But of course I could be wrong."

"You not only could be—you are!" he snorted.

Danny turned and Mary followed. They went into the stockroom which was lined with rows of high-priced apparel.

Danny chose a black satin suit, with a head-hugging cloche and purse. He motioned Mary to a fitting-room, telling her he'd meet her outside and emphasizing the need for speed.

Mary changed, gave herself a hasty survey in the mirror and, her smile pleased, hastened to join Danny. Outside, he flagged a cab and gave the driver their destination. Then he turned his attention to Mary. "Now remember, you're not Cinderella. Mr. Castle is paying for the luncheon and he expects results."

"I won't let Mr. Castle down," Mary said, pretending intense interest in the Manhattan traffic.

Danny's smile was grim. "Nice that you're so certain of success. Only try to remember Starlight Frocks and Gowns, Incorporated, is giving him a play, too, and—"

"Starlight is our biggest rival," Mary parrotted.

"This assignment would be a cinch

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for Linnette," Danny said grimly. "All I'd have to do would be to sit back and let her turn on the charm."

"Meaning of course, the cooing voice, flirtatious glance, helpless manner and gorgeous figure." Mary paused and shifted to face Danny. "Are you insinuating that you're lunching with Mr. Gilson and me?"

Danny returned her indignant look. "That's the usual procedure. With you, I'll have to do some of the selling myself."

"With me," Mary repeated softly. A trickle of laughter escaped her.

Danny's eyes widened in surprise. "Say, you've got something when you smile. As a matter of fact, I'm beginning to discover you've got plenty. With my help, you probably won't do so badly."

"Only I'm not going to have your help," Mary told him blandly. "You are not lunching with Mr. Gilson and me."

Danny's lips pursed angrily. "Now listen here, Mary. It's the only ethical way."

"Then we'll dispense with the ethics. You depress me."

Danny's laugh was grim. "You've a lot of confidence in yourself."

"Mr. Castle inspired it," Mary said staunchly. "I'm not going to let him down."

"And you're not lunching alone with Mr. Gilson." Danny's arms crossed his chest.

"Either I lunch alone with Mr. Gilson —or I don't lunch."

Danny looked at the stubborn expression on Mary's face. He attempted reasoning. "You don't know the stock, the materials, the workmanship and you're not a saleswoman."

"I've worked with Moonmist for over a year. I know everything connected with the business as well as, or better than you. I'm a female, interested in fashions and, as of now, I'm a saleswoman."

The cab pulled before the entrance to the hotel. Danny started to pay the fare, but Mary's hand caught his. She said, "You go back. I'll let you know all the details when I return."

Danny glanced at the hand clutching his wrist, then at Mary. "Would you think me insulting if I said you were the biggest little pain-in-the-neck I've ever met?"

"Would you think me insulting," Mary countered, "if I were to say you are the most atrocious dresser I've ever seen?"

"That does it." Danny put the bill back in his pocket, got into the cab and shouted at Mary's retreating back. "Go ahead and make a mess of it. Lose the whole order for us. It will teach Ben Castle a lesson!"

MARY turned just long enough to wrinkle her nose at him. Inside, she was led to the reserved table where Mr. Gilson was already seated. He was tall, quite handsome, with hair prematurely gray at the temples.

He arose, looking rather surprised. "I expected Miss Fern. Has something happened to her?"

Mary felt the room spin, but she quickly recovered her confidence. "Miss Fern couldn't make it," she said, smiling. "I'm the substitute. I hope you won't mind."

"Of course not." Mr. Gilson pulled back a chair. "Please be seated."

"I wasn't aware that you were acquainted with Miss Fern," Mary remarked casually.

"Oh, yes," came the smiling reply. "We met at a cocktail party yesterday. Didn't she tell you?"

"As a matter of fact," Mary decided to be honest about it, "Linnette didn't come to work today. But I'm sure I can give you all the information you need. And once you've seen our display of gowns, you'll be completely convinced I'm speaking the truth."

Mr. Gilson seemed amused at her earnestness. "Then suppose we order and you can tell me while we lunch."

Mary did just that, without once attempting to flirt or be coy. Her words flowed easily and it was obvious her information concerning the merchandise was complete.

It seemed no time before Mary was in a cab again, speeding downtown. While she'd got no definite response from Mr. Gilson, he'd been a courteous listener. However, he had mentioned their competitor, Starlight Gowns, and

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Mary shuddered at the thought of Linnette leaving Moonmist just now and switching to Starlight.

Mary knew that Linnette would really work to sell Starlight Gowns just to get even with Ben Castle. But she hadn't dared leave the table to phone him not to fire Linnette.

When she entered the office, Linnette was angrily striding out. Mary told the girl at the switchboard to inform Mr. Castle she was back. He asked that she come right in.

Danny, looking doleful, was standing near a window. Mr. Castle was at his desk chewing on a dry cigar. He looked hopefully at Mary's face for any sign of success. "Well, Mary—?" he asked.

She eased herself into a chair beside his desk. "Mr. Gilson didn't commit himself. He said he'd like a little time to think it over."

"That's all Linnette needs." Danny spoke from his place by the window. "A little time to go over to Starlight. After that, she'll work on Gilson."

"She knows him," Mary informed dolefully.

"She just told us," Mr. Castle said, trying to smile, but not being very successful.

Mary felt miserable. "I did my best, but I guess it just wasn't good enough."

"Obviously it wasn't," came Danny's tart reply. "Ben picked a fine time to fire Linnette."

Mr. Castle smiled at Mary while he said, "Shut up, Danny. We didn't get a refusal yet so we don't know what's in Gilson's mind."

Danny turned and approached the desk. He tapped it as he said, "But we do know we need that sale—and bad."

"We'll get along—somehow. Anyway, thanks, Mary."

Mary nodded and arose, feeling like a criminal. She'd failed Mr. Castle. She was at the door when the phone rang. Mr. Castle answered, then pressed his hand tight against the transmitter and made a hissing sound.

Mary turned. "It's Gilson!" Mr. Castle said, "he wants to talk with you."

Mary practically flew to the phone. Danny, looking stunned, dropped into a chair. She talked for a few minutes, then hung up.

Her face beamed with excitement. "Mr. Gilson wants to take me to dinner and the theater tonight," she said. "He didn't say anything about the merchandise though."

"Never mind that." Mr. Castle popped a fresh cigar into his mouth. "Danny, give Mary the swellest gown we have."

DANNY, looking as if he'd just received a blood transfusion, already had Mary's arm and was piloting her toward the door. As they raced through the office, into the long corridor, he remarked shyly, "I guess I judged you a bit too harshly."

Mary suppressed a smile at his apologetic tone. "It's all right. And perhaps I can't say it's all due to my newly acquired business acumen. I learned that Mr. Gilson used to vacation in my home town in Connecticut, so we discussed mutual acquaintances."

Danny did such a quick about-face that Mary was thrown against him. He gripped both her arms. She felt her heartbeat quicken. It couldn't be that she still had a case on this arrogant individual. Since she wasn't the vindictive type, it was probably just a wave of pity flooding her. She swallowed hard, told herself pity could be a dangerous emotion and tried to step back, but Danny's grip was too firm.

Speaking slowly, she began, "Mr. Gilson is very interesting and quite fascinating. He has a way of making a girl like me who is really only an office file clerk feel quite important."

Danny, for some reason, looked worried. "You're a very good clerk. And obviously, a good salesman—or saleswoman, I should say," he finished weakly.

"Salesman will do nicely," Mary said, her smile bright. "It has a more important sound in it."

Only it wasn't easy to be so nonchalant with Danny studying every line of her face. There was a softness in his dark eyes that Mary had never seen before. And a lock of his unruly hair failed to hide the questioning frown on his brow.

"M-Mary," he spoke hesitantly, "it—it so happens I own a tux. I could get it

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out of mothballs and accompany you tonight."

Mary was beginning to think, with Danny so close, that it would be a divine idea. But just as quickly she rejected it.

"I'm sorry, but Mr. Gilson invited me. He might be offended if you tagged along, and that would jeopardize the order."

"You're sure it isn't because I'd be in the way?"

Mary's eyes widened innocently. "Of course not. You're very sweet. At least, you can be when the mood suits you."

"Thanks," Danny said grimly. "I'm flattered by your high opinion of me."

In another moment, Mary would have apologized. Only Danny chose that moment to slip his arms quickly about her waist in a strong grip. Then his lips were on hers in a firm, possessive embrace. Mary was too stunned to resist at first, but when she felt her reserve slipping, she brought back her foot and gave Danny's shin a hard kick with the heel of her shoe.

He groaned and released her.

"Just what was the reason for that?" Mary asked indignantly.

"That was just—just," Danny flared back, "to wish you luck."

Mary wanted to raise the fist doubled at her side and strike him. She felt her eyes smart. "You're the freshest, rudest man I've ever known!" she managed to say.

Danny was hopping on one foot while he massaged the other leg. "I didn't mean to be fresh or rude. I—I—I—it was just because you made a face at me in front of the hotel."

Mary blinked. "You're crazy, besides. But if you'll just select a gown so I may try it on for size, I'll overlook the insult. Only don't get smart again or I'll walk out."

"I'm beginning to believe you'd let Ben down just as fast as Linnette did," Danny grumbled, heading for the stockroom.

"Don't you dare mention that girl to me," Mary warned.

Danny turned quickly. Pointing a finger at the door, he almost shouted, "Wait out there. And don't mention Linnette to me."

Mary breathed deeply, then slowly exhaled. Try as she might, she couldn't seem to get the best of him. And if his embrace had upset her, it was because it had been so unexpected. It could have meant nothing to Danny as he was carrying such a torch for Linnette he couldn't bear to hear her name spoken.

FINALLY Danny emerged with a lovely blue tulle strapless gown, covered with glittering silver sequins. Mary gasped with pleasure and her face went dreamy. He did have wonderful taste in women's clothes.

He quickly brought her back to earth. "I'm sure Gilson will find you as fascinating tonight as you seem to have found him this afternoon," he said acidly. "But remember, this is still a business date."

"I will." Mary took the gown from Danny. "And may I remind you," she added as tartly, "that Castle still has every confidence in me."

"For the present, my congratulations," Danny purred. "If condolences are in order tomorrow, I'll offer them, too."

She was too dumbfounded at his brazenness to think of a suitable retort. Danny made a speedy exit down the hall, his face wreathed in a smile that was half triumphant and half mocking.

Mary went into the fitting-room and slipped into the gown. It was a perfect fit. She took it off and, as she packed it carefully, she murmured a fervent prayer that she would be successful tonight. Not only to justify Mr. Castle's faith in her, but to show that lunkhead whom she'd fancied herself in love with for the past year just how wrong he was about her. . . .

The following morning Mary was ushered into Mr. Castle's office. He was at his desk, hopefully awaiting her report. Danny fidgeted restlessly in a chair on one side of it. Mary sat down, looking very pleased. She ignored Danny, although completely conscious of his direct gaze.

She announced, "Mr. Gilson is coming here this morning. However," she added, "he's going to Starlight first. He promised Linnette he would."

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Danny groaned. Mr. Castle slapped his desk. "So Linnette was double-crossing us all the time she worked here."

"He promised he wouldn't order until he saw our stock," Mary said hopefully.

"I can just see him getting out of Starlight without ordering," Danny said disconsolately. "Not a chance with Linnette's high-voltage charm versus yours."

Mary stiffened. "I didn't try charm on Mr. Gilson. I used facts, figures and common sense. And he happens to be very intelligent. He's also a gentleman. He gave me his word and I'm sure he'll keep it."

"Of course, he will, Mary," Mr. Castle spoke kindly, but doubt was evident in his face. "It's just that Danny knows as well as I do that Linnette is now all out to wreak vengeance upon us."

Danny nodded morose agreement. "She'll do it, too."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Gilson." Mary arose. "If there's nothing more, I've a lot of filing to do."

Mr. Castle nodded. Danny got up and followed her. Outside, he said:

"Mary, don't feel too badly about this. You wanted to make good, but you were working against too great odds."

That was all Mary needed to complete her misery. Her eyes misted, but she fought back the tears. "Danny Brown," she said fiercely, "I hate you, and d-don't you ever dare speak to me again. You and your Linnette! What you ought to do is go over to Starlight yourself. I'm sure she could get you a job there so you could continue to follow her around like a lovesick adolescent."

Danny's features were a mixture of chagrin and bewilderment. His mouth opened to speak, but now Mary couldn't hold back the tears any longer. She turned and ran quickly for the protection of the powder room. There she had a good cry, told herself she was a fool to get her eyes all swollen and bloodshot over a man who kept telling her how completely lacking she was in all feminine attributes.

She placed cold compresses over her eyes and then patted her face with icy water. She had just finished powdering her nose when one of the girls came in and told her Mr. Castle wanted to see her.

Reluctantly Mary returned to his office, her mind made up to submit her resignation. But when she entered the office, she sensed a change in the atmosphere. Mr. Castle looked jubilant.

"Mary," he said excitedly, "Gilson has just been here. He looked over our stock and placed a big order with us. He gave you credit for selling him on our line. Your amazing knowledge of materials, costs, and styles convinced him that Moonmist does a solid job of merchandising without trying to dazzle a buyer with nothing but glamorous company. Excellent, eh?"

Mary thought it was, but she felt too limp to speak.

"Also—" Mr. Castle casually applied a match to a fresh cigar—"you're no longer a file clerk here. You're to have an office with a stenographer of your own. And maybe, pretty soon, you'll be a stockholder like Danny."

"Danny's a stockholder?" Mary blurted.

"He and I started this concern together. Only Danny likes to go out and get the business. He's good, Mary. And now with you to help us, we'll be a sure-fire combination."

COURAGE and faith in herself suddenly returned to Mary as she realized she'd at last bested Linnette. That, more than anything, made her determined to remain on the job. Her relations with Danny would be confined strictly to business. And her love, unreturned, could quietly die. There'd be no time for torchbearing.

"Thanks, Mr. Castle," Mary said. "I hardly know what to say, but I'm very grateful!"

"Your new office is two doors down." Mr. Castle motioned southward. "Go right in there and get to work."

"Thanks, Mr. Castle." Mary arose and almost ran out the door.

She went into her office and stopped suddenly. Danny Brown, acting like an office boy, was industriously applying a feather duster to the desk.

He gave her a sheepish smile, dropped the duster and approached her. "Mary, it seems as if I'm forever apologizing

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to you. I'm sorry I hurt your feelings a short time ago.

Soberly, Mary said, "It's all right. I didn't know until just now that you're really a big shot here."

Danny gave her a startled look. "I'm not."

"Yes, you are," she affirmed. "Also, I realize you're so in love with Linnette, it has you all upset."

Danny gave her a startled look. "In love with Linnette?" he repeated, frowning. "Where did you get that idea?"

Mary backed until she touched her desk. "I thought—all the girls in the office thought—that is—"

"You'd better inform the girls," Danny said when Mary's voice faded, "that I am not, never have been and never will be in love with Linnette. It so happens she's an excellent clothes-horse. But she's all temperament and no brains. I kept catering to her because I thought we needed her. But love her? No!" He finished with a shout.

Mary jumped, then murmured an apology.

Danny's smile was troubled as he went on. "I am in love, though—with you."

It was Mary's turn to stare. She tapped her chest questioningly, and Danny nodded assurance.

"When you made that face at me in front of the hotel, it was as if an iron band snapped clear around my heart. I had a very crushing sensation. You're cute and spunky and you have lots of brains and plenty of glamour."

"I?" Mary managed weakly.

"Yes." Danny paused. Then, rather sheepishly, "Mary, I know you don't think much of me just now, but I was wondering if I dressed conservatively and tried to make myself over to suit you, perhaps—just perhaps you might go out with me once in a while. Of course, it's a long shot." He attempted a laugh which sounded more like a croak. "I might grow on you a little."

His genuine humility touched her deeply. Also, it left her so flabbergasted, she couldn't speak. Danny took her silence for refusal. "It's all right, Mary," he said. "Anyone as lovely and sweet as you couldn't possibly fall for a lug like me. But I wasn't going to leave without trying, anyway. I won't bother you again."

He turned and headed for the door. Mary's wits suddenly returned.

"Danny," she called out, running after him, "Danny you're not a lug, or if you are, you're a wonderful one. I've loved you for a whole year."

"Mary!" Danny turned. His arms raised and gathered her to him. "Are you sure?" he managed to say.

She nodded wistfully. "Kiss me and see."

Danny did. Then he sighed and whispered huskily, "I'm sure."

"So am I," Mary said, pressing her face against the gray sports coat with wide yellow stripes. "And don't go too conservative on me, darling. Your clothes suit your personality."

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE

MODEL FOR HAPPINESS

A Glamorous Complete Novelet by FRANCES STIERHEM

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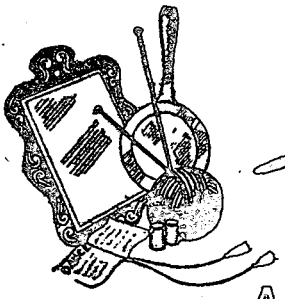

Listen, Girls!

A CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

NEW YEAR'S Eve is one night in the year when a date or a party is a *must.* You can be a stay-at-home any other night of the year—but when this festive night comes around, you want to have a best beau to kiss when everybody sings "Auld Lang Syne."

If the girls and boys in your crowd haven't gotten around to planning anything, you start the ball a-rolling. Make your guest list fairly small—just four or five couples—but be sure the couples really like each other.

Let your guests dance. Turn on the radio and let them whip up steam by listening to the New Year sweep across the country at

midnight. Give some kind of noisemaker to each of your guests and give them each a small lighted candle. Keep silence in the dark until the clock strikes 12. Then cut loose! Every man finds the girl he likes best in the scuffle.

Have a buffet table set up with all sorts of good things. And let your crowd create their own sandwiches. A pot of hot coffee and a gooey, delicious dessert.

Here's a recipe for a party cake that's hard to beat.

PINEAPPLE REFRIGERATOR CAKE

1½ tbsps. plain unflavored gelatin
6 tbsps. cold water
1 No. 1 can crushed pineapple, undrained
Granulated sugar
1½ tbsps. lemon juice
Two 8" sponge layers
1¼ cups heavy cream
1 cup fresh or frozen strawberries, sliced and sweetened

Soak the gelatin in cold water for five minutes. Heat pineapple to boiling point; then add the gelatin to the pineapple mixture and stir until dissolved. Add 6 tablespoons sugar and the lemon juice and chill until it begins to thicken.

Meanwhile split the cake layers. Cut in slices, and use part of them to line the bottom and sides of a pan about 10" x 6" x 2". Whip ¾ cup of the cream and fold into the pineapple mixture. Spread half of this on the cake on bottom of pan, top with a similar layer of cake, then spread with the remaining pineapple mixture. Top with remaining cake, placed cut side down. Chill 4 hours or longer.

To serve, spread top with the remaining ½ cup cream whipped until stiff and combined with 1½ teaspoons sugar and ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract. Cut in squares and garnish with the strawberries. This recipe will serve 10.

Real party fare!

Grooming from the Ground Up

Face the facts about your feet—because your face wil show it if you have tired aching feet. If you really want to scintillate for that Large Date, there's nothing like a little ground work grooming to give your entire body a lift.

Here are a few tips to put you in good standing for the evening:

Soak your feet in a comfortably warm foot bath to which has been added ordinary baking soda. Three tablespoonfuls to one quart of water will do a good soothing job. After 10 or 15 minutes, rub feet dry with a Turkish towel, using an upward motion to stimulate circulation.

Of course, you're going to change your shoes and stockings often. A change of shoes and fresh stockings at the end of a hard day rests your feet, saves your shoes and helps guard against foot odor.

Never don shoes without stockings or some protection between your feet and the shoe

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lining. Stockings can be washed, shoe linings cannot.

If you're switching from high to low-heeled shoes, here's a trick to help you do it more comfortably. In your bare feet walk around the room first on tiptoe, then on your heels.

For real relaxing comfort, try burrowing your toes into the soft nap of your rug, just as you might in the sand at the beach. Wiggle your toes comfortably. Use them to pick up pencils, marbles or sticks.

For Dry Skin Sufferers

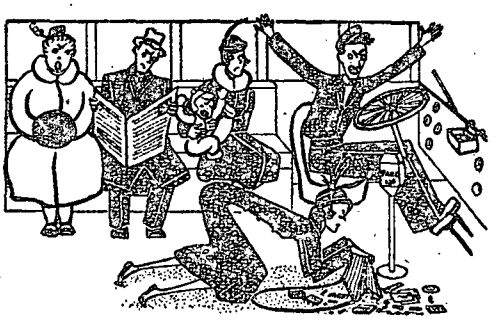
You may be one of the lucky gals whose skin is not affected by wintry weather. But many dry skin sufferers go through a trying time during cold weather. The dry, sensitive skin is the perfect site for early and easy etching of lines and wrinkle development—which is a good reason for being generous with cream and other lubricants.

If the hands become red and itchy and the skin cracks, strong soaps should not be used. Whenever possible, clean the hands with cleasing cream. This may seem more complicated than scrubbing them with soap and water, but you will have much better looking hands.

Chapping and splitting of the lips is discouraged by using a lip pomade under your usual lipstick. When you're at home, use the pomade by itself. Do not be sparing in the use of lubricating creams if your skin feels dry, drawn taut and if it flakes and chaps.

In the Bag

A tidy handbag is part of good grooming. Opening up a purse that is disorderly, clut-



tered and makes you forage frantically for keys, lipstick or bus fare, puts a dent in your good grooming rating.

Clean your purse often. Arrange items for quick getting-at. Your purse is an integral part of your ensemble and should be as immaculate as you are. Besides, think of the grateful bus drivers who are constantly annoyed by gals who hold up the line while they're digging around their cluttered bags hoping to come up with the right fare.

The male in your life, too, will be grateful—for they don't like a purse opened up to a scene of disorder that discloses a messy puff, scratched vanities and loose tobacco crumbs.

The Beauty Angle

Beauty begins on the floor! Lie on the floor to get a beauty lift. The latest glamour craze is the beauty angle. It's a charm builder that takes only a few minutes before bedtime and the results are worth it.

Remove makeup thoroughly with several applications of cold cream, apply a thin layer of facial mask, soak two cotton balls or squares in witch hazel and you're all set for your beauty angle.

This means lying on the floor with a hard pillow or two under your middle section, head and shoulders on the floor and feet up against the seat of your bed or couch, witch hazel pads over the eyes.

Five to fifteen minutes of this will promote better circulation and you will feel wonderfully relaxed.

Shampoo Your Gloves

If you are addicted to American-made washable leather gloves which do not have to be sent to the cleaners, here's a shampooing routine for them that will preserve their gloss and shapeliness through repeated washings.

Put the gloves to be washed on the hands—because leather gloves should always be washed on the hands. Prepare in the bathroom basin a mixture of tepid water and soapflakes.

Then proceed as though you are actually washing your hands without gloves, but do it very gently. Slosh around in the tepid suds until the dirt of the gloves is removed and the gloves are completely clean.

After this, rinse the gloves in clear water, then place them on a Turkish towel and gently press out as much water as possible. Next blow into the damp gloves and through the fingers to restore the original shape and prevent the leather from sticking together.

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Now the gloves are ready to be placed on hollow plastic glove forms that have holes on all sides through which the air can circulate to hasten the drying process. In putting the gloves on the forms, be careful to get all four fingers of each hand in place before adjusting the thumbs, to avoid stretching.

Before the gloves are entirely dry, take them from the drying forms and draw them gently on the hands—first one, then the other, while with the bare hand, you massage and mold the still slightly damp leather to smooth out all roughness and conform the contours to those of your own fingers.

Your Fluttering Lashes

If beauty wishes were granted, there would be many requests for silky lashes of unusual length, jet black, with lovely curled tips. They are romantic looking and impart an air of mystery. Believe it or not, if your lashes aren't all that they should be, you can do something about it.

Eyelashes are not a hardy growth. They molt easily. Any irritation of the lids may prove devastating. For that reason see that your eyes are in healthy condition. When tired, rest them and use an eye wash. Apply a lotion if the day has been dusty. Bathe the eyes twice a day with hot water, then with cold.

Night and morning apply mineral oil. Your eyelashes will thrive on it. Put it on lightly, but so that it will touch the roots. The oil will not irritate the eyes. If there is a little left on the upper lids, don't wipe it away. Misty eyelids have greater appeal than those with a dull finish.

Only foolish young things clip off the ends of the lashes. It won't make your lashes grow longer. Clipping produces stubby ends that are anything but glamorous.

Mascara is a safe means of darkening the lashes, but keep the brush clean. After the application has dried, use a second brush to separate the lashes.

And now you can flutter your lashes like mad!

Hair Care

Is your hair the crowning glory it should be? Or is it dry and frizzy looking? Try to restore its resilience by scheduling shampoos at longer intervals than ordinarily.

Between shampoos, use a special preparation to cleanse scalp pores of dust, oily deposits and flaked-off scalp tissue. Falling or thinning hair should get a nightly application of scalp pomade, massaged gently into the scalp at the hairline, temples and crown. On alternate days, depending on your particular problem, apply a preparation for dry or a preparation for oily hair, parting hair strands so the entire scalp may be reached with a bit of cotton, moistened in the corrective lotion. Rub the hair dry, lightly, with a soft, lintless towel; then finish your hair care routine by brushing.

Set waves and curls with a solid, brilliantine type cream, which should also be used daily as a hair dressing or make-up for dry, brittle, split hair ends.

For That Slimming Effect

Just because you are heavy set, you don't have to look matronly in your clothes. Buy things that have a slimming effect. For one thing, your frock should be simple—no ruffles or frills. It should have good up and down lines which lead the eye in vertical lines instead of horizontal ones.

A good skirt for you flares gracefully below the hips.

Make sure the dress you buy has proper fullness through the bustline but does not bunch or hang loosely at the waist. The neckline, too, is important. The V-neck is right for you.

Look for a sleeve that enhances your arm. Also make sure your sleeve has a shoulder pad in it. A drooping shoulder line would only seem to add weight.

The waistline should be slim and trim but it would be uncomfortable to have a tight skirt all the way down.

Ironing Day Notes

To speed up and simplify your ironing, learn the easiest treatment for the type of fabric you are ironing. And don't lean on the iron. Let the heat do the work.

Arrange clothes so that you will iron the ones requiring low temperature first, gradually working up to those needing higher temperatures. Iron each piece until it is dry. Pay particular attention to sections of double thickness such as collars, facings and pockets. Iron them on the wrong side first, then on the right side until they're completely dry.

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Cotton should be dampened evenly and pressed on the right side with a hot iron. Press dark colored cottons on the wrong side.

Linen should be dampened evenly and pressed on the right side with a hot iron.

Dark colored linens take their ironing on the wrong side.

Press silk on the wrong side with a moderately hot iron. For wool, use a damp pressing cloth, press on right side with a moderately hot iron.

Rayons should be allowed to dry to just the right degree of dampness and then ironed, instead of allowing them to dry completely and then sprinkling.

Legs in the Spotlight

Skirts have gone up and trim legs are in the spotlight again. If you've been reading your fashion columns, you'll realize that you can't rely on skirts to cover up leg shortcomings. Those underpinnings are being cast into a stronger limelight.

Stand before a mirror, place your legs together and see how they shape up. Are they too thin, too heavy at the calves, or does a space appear between the calves? You can overcome your particular fault with corrective measures. Get busy.

Calves that are too heavy will take this vigorous exercise: supporting the body with one arm against the wall, swing the foot forward and back with the toes turned up and back. Repeat with the other leg. Keep alternating for several rounds of exercise. Then repeat the exercise, alternating the feet, but this time keep the toes turned down.

To fill in the space between the calves, try this one. It's difficult at first, but you can do it if you really want to. Lie flat on the back on the floor. Place a small pillow or hassock between the ankles. Keeping the knee caps turned outward, strain until your calves touch. Now lift the pillow or hassock as high as you can with the legs. Repeat three times, increasing the number of counts as you go along.

Too thin legs are generally part of a too thin body. The curves are missing. Add plenty of cream, butter, rich foods to your menu —get plenty of outdoor exercise—enough sleep—and cut down on the rushing around. If the rest of your body gains, the legs will get their share.

Tips for Teen-Agers

Teen agers who want good figures and complexions will not fill up with gooey sweets. They'll drink orange juice or milk instead.

They'll make the best of their looks by learning good posture while sitting, standing and walking because they know that clothes and looks are ruined by slouching.

They won't slap on any old cream or make-up. They will study their skins to find out exactly what is the best care.

They won't stick to outmoded hairdos but will try something new, pert and sharp.

They won't wear clothes which are too long, too big or too tight. But they will learn about dressmaking so they can alter clothes and have them fit just right.

And if you're a cute, smart, teen-ager, you will do the same!

Chit Chat from Here and There

Glitter goes to the neck. The spotlight is on necklines again this season and whether they're high or low, necklaces supply the necessary drama. This year they are bold and beautiful in bib, choker or noose styles.

Take care of that precious fur coat of yours. Think twice before you pin a flower on it. Looks pretty, yes—but furriers tell us that a pin stuck through the leather can cause peel. And a stem which may be damp will cause matting and rubbing on a long-haired fur. Friction on fur is not good for it and anything that tends to rub the fur should be avoided. This applies to jewelry, pins and bracelets, which may rub the pelts. Furs must be handled with care—shaken out after rain, left to dry in a cool spot, put on wide, longnecked hangers and put in closets with plenty of breathing space around them.

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Have you seen the new zipper? It's a much needed, seam-thin slide fastener, no wider than the most delicate seam—but just as sturdy as the heavier zipper. It's grand on filmy fabrics.

For career girls: here's a tip that saves ironing time and cleaner's bills—skirts and slacks will stay neatly pressed and hold shape better if they are kept in drawers, laid flat, loosely packed with paper between each layer.

We've been told that more and more gals are having their ears pierced—the better to wear antique earrings. Ballet dancers are really going in for it because they frequently lose earrings while dancing. The rating for earring popularity at the moment goes this way—hoop earrings first and pearls take second place. Antique earrings and reproductions are in great demand, too.

Here's a cheering word for ice cream lovers with figure worries. Must be so—the National Dairy Council should know. Ice cream contains rich source of Vitamin A, a nutrient needed for growth, good eyesight and for health of vital tissues. It contains large amounts of riboflavin, which stimulates better health and vigor. It has a high calcium content, necessary for all age groups to build and maintain strong bones and teeth. It is relatively low in calories but high in total nutritive value. It makes ideal food for those interested in a low caloric intake.

A word to the movie-struck—consult "Your Career in Motion Pictures," a book compiled by Charles Reed Jones and just published by Sheridan House. It contains personal advice and instruction on motion pictures, television and radio careers—by such celebrities as Bob Hope, Frank Sinatra, Loretta Young, Gene Autry, Betty Grable, Gertrude Berg and many others. And it may help you decide whether it's worth-while, in your case, to make the try!

Haircut Hints

The short haircut is still popular—but head contour is of great importance. There are certain rules that you should know before insisting on doing your hair a certain way.

The round face and low forehead should have the hair swept straight back in front to make her a bit more high-browish. No fluff stuff at the sides—just one or two wave lines. The hair should be cut to expose the ears—because that will make the cheeks appear thinner. No bangs—but if you insist, they should be parted and be longer on one side than the other.

If the face is oval and the forehead high you want the center part. It shortens and widens the countenance. A dip on one side is a flattering touch. At the back there should be a fairish amount of hair, fluffed to softness to make the back of the head appear shorter.

OUR NEXT ISSUE

The moon was a huge amber-golden circle as Ann Lawson stepped briskly along the Ghost Walk, so familiar to her that no hint of fear could touch her on such a night. Two giant yew trees bent above a low white gate that marked the beginning of a garden and here she paused to look at the beauty that had drawn her night after night ever since she had first come to her aunt's shabby cottage.

Suddenly there was a faint movement near her, and a man's voice: "Don't be frightened—please, don't be frightened."

Ann turned. He stood within the shadows and she was conscious only of a darker shadow that wore a small glimmering white blur that was his face.

"I'm not frightened," she said. "I've always expected to meet a ghost here—and if ghosts exist at all, it should be in some such spot as this. . . ."

"I'm Elliott Marsden," he said gently.

"I remember. You were only twenty-two when you . . . went away!"

She took an impulsive step toward him, and suddenly found herself swept up in his arms. And as if in a dreamlike trance, she accepted his kisses that set the stars to swinging and the ancient trees to doing a mad, exciting dance. Then he stepped back into the shadows and vanished without a sound.

"Kissed by a ghost," said Ann shakenly. "But—but—ghosts don't kiss!"

Of course, Ann soon discovered that he was not the deceased Elliott Marsden—but Elliott Marsden, Third, a grand-nephew of the fabulous young man who had been killed in a duel here in the Southland. But that moment in the garden always remained Ann's ENCHANTED MOMENT in the glamorous novelet of that name by Peggy Gaddis.

And it was truly an ENCHANTED MO-

(Concluded on page 91)

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BACHELOR HUSBAND

CHAPTER I

GREEN-EYES AND THE GOON

THE car braked in the drive of the motor court, tires whining. Christie Gaylord rose from her desk in the lounge with a frown. Gaylord's-by-the-Sea did not approve of guests who arrived in such impetuous fashion. She stepped outside, uncertain.

A lengthily built dark young man wa climbing from a lengthily built blue con vertible. He looked tired and warm, an disgruntled. Wind had blown his hai into a mop of black curls. He strode t the door where Christie waited, slim an cool.

"When Is a Wife Not a Wife?" Becomes the

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a novelet by
HELEN AHERN

"This Gaylord's?" he asked unnecessarily.

With a flip of her hand, Christie indicated the sign that carried the name of her mother's auto camp. The new arrival focussed his blue gaze upon her, and it stayed focussed to admire. Christie had black-fringed gray eyes that she had matched with a sports dress of gray linen, collared in white. Her soft fair hair borrowed gold from the sun that was setting over Virginia.

"I'm sorry." He apologized for his rudeness with a lightning grin that

Big Question in Christie Gaylord's Heart!

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made him breath-takingly attractive. "I'm a goon, but I've been driving all day, and part of the night. From New York."

"You'd like a room, or a cottage?" asked Christie.

He hesitated, then asked, "You've got a girl here? A little girl with lots of black hair and kind of greenish eyes?"

Christie hoped that she did not look as grim as she felt. The girl he described had arrived the day before and had been a pain in the neck. She was, however, entitled to protection from inquiring strangers.

"I'm afraid, Mr.—?" Christie paused.

"I'm Court Merle," said the young man. "Courtenay Merle."

The name came as a small inexplicable shock. The spoiled pretty girl who had moved into Gaylord's the previous day had registered as *Mrs. Courtenay Merle.*

"Your wife has taken a cottage," said Christie, formally. "I'll show you."

SHE started to lead the way back through the lounge to the front courtyard and cottages, but Court Merle made no immediate move to follow her. She turned around again to find him standing, dismayed.

"So she really did it," he said. "I might have known. Leave it to Flip."

Christie arched delicate dark brows, and he explained. "Flip. That's . . . the girl I was talking about."

"Mrs. Merle . . . your wife."

He struck Christie as needing to be reminded that Flip was his wife. She opened the screen door to the lounge. When the Spanish style house had been the Gaylords' private summer home, this had been the living room. It opened upon a tilted patio and landscaped yard. Beyond a low retaining wall, the Atlantic rolled in gently to a private beach.

"Nice set-up," said Court Merle. "You're here for all summer?"

"This is my home, my mother's and mine. I'm Christie Gaylord." She told him her name politely, then added, "Your wife has one of our nicest cottages. It's the second one, over there among the pines."

She pointed to the left, where a half-dozen guest cottages nestled in a green grove. The door of the second on opened at that moment. A girl—Flip—flew out into the yard.

"Court! Court, darling!" she crie and ran to meet him.

In a bright-printed sarong and bra top bathing suit, she gave the effect c a bird. She was small and delicatel built, with a mass of loose-swingin black hair. Her eyes were greenish, a Court Merle had described them. Aqua marine would have been a better wor A too-pointed face and petulant mout kept her from prettiness.

Court Merle did not take a step t meet her. Christie retreated, but sh would have to run to miss hearing an seeing the encounter.

"Court, you old sweet!" Flip thre her arms around his neck. "You di come!"

"Don't crow." He disentangled hin self. "I hadn't much choice. What's th big idea?"

Flip uttered a furious sound. "You— she began and stopped. She flashed har blue-green eyes at Christie. "Let's g down to the cottage," she said nastil "Too much help around here to talk

Christie sensed rather than saw Cou Merle's glance of apology. She conti ued on her way to the house, her so lips pressed tight. Flip was the mo obnoxious guest ever to stop at Ga lord's-by-the-Sea. She had insisted fu on treating mother and daughter a servants. She commandeered the re ular motor court maids and handyme for personal services. Christie hope that her unhappy husband would r move her, but fast.

From an open window in the Ga lords' private ell in the house, she ke an eye on the white cottage into whic the couple had disappeared. She sa Court Merle emerge alone ten minut later. Flip's shrewish voice, followin him, carried across the courtyard.

"All right, heel!" she yelled. "Let n down! Walk out on me! You'll sorry."

He did not answer or turn his hea He proceeded to the patio where paused to look around as if in search someone. Christie sighed. She cou hear her mother in the kitchen wi Chloe, the old colored woman wh

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cooked and cared for them personally. Unwillingly, Christie returned to the lounge to play dutiful hostess. She had a curious half-fear of further contact with the big dark young man.

"Oh, hello, Miss—Christie." He came in from the patio, smiling. "I wonder if I could get a room for the night, here in the house?" he said.

SHE considered his request. There was only one room available in the wing of the house that was reserved for tourists. Flip had rented a two-bedroom cottage.

"Please!" He grinned. "I don't sleep well in cottages. I'm the nervous type."

He was all bone and muscle. Christie laughed, but showed him to the small room and bath that opened on an extension of the patio. She explained about meals. Gaylord's served only breakfasts. He would have to get his dinner in town a mile up the beach.

"Okay," said Court Merle. "All I want now is a shower and a couple of hours sleep."

He insisted upon getting his own bag from the convertible. He promised to be an easy guest.

His coming filled the motor court. Christie hung out the *No Vacancy* sign, and went back to the private wing to change her dress. Belatedly, she remembered that she had invited Paul Coleman for dinner. That had been only this morning. It seemed a long time ago. Dressing, Christie paused to puzzle about her feeling that much had happened when nothing had happened. A new guest had arrived and quarreled with his wife. That was all part of a day's work in an auto camp.

She put on a sheer white, off-shoulder blouse and black-and-white striped taffeta skirt that swirled saucily above slim shell pumps. It was possible, although improbable, that Paul might take her dancing. He operated a fishing and hunting lodge on the Outer Banks, fifteen miles down the coast. It was a new venture, and he had little time and money to spend in the glittering night spots of the nearby resort town.

Christie was brushing on lipstick when she heard his pick-up truck drive into the motor court. She did not hurry. Paul liked to talk to her mother, who sometimes sent him sportsmen customers. He hoped to be Mrs. Gaylord's son-in-law.

They were discussing the prospects of the season just starting when Christie appeared in the living room. Paul stood up and whistled softly.

"You look sweet enough," he said, "to eat on hot cakes."

Christie laughed. The unromantic compliment was typical of Paul.

He was very tall, even taller than Court Merle, with powerful shoulders and arms. His straight blond hair was sun-bleached and his light blue eyes wreathed by tiny wind and sun wrinkles. He had spent most of his life on the Banks and had served with the Navy three years. He was an outdoor man and a hard worker.

Christie was always ashamed to catch herself thinking him heavy-handed and obtuse, almost stupid at times. Paul Coleman was no dashing summer boy. But she was no summer girl. Paul and she were what the tourists called "natives." It was likely that they belonged together.

She wished that she could banish the suspicion that his interest in her was not entirely unmercenary. It was unfair. He was practical-minded. He could not help but be aware of the advantages of allying his infant sports lodge with Gaylord's-by-the-Sea.

CHAPTER II

MAKE-BELIEVE HUSBAND

THEY dined upon Chloe's justly famous fried chicken. Dinner over, Mrs. Gaylord turned the radio to a symphony program. Music was one of the few relaxations permitted by her busy life. She was a slender woman with dark hair and dark eyes, who looked less than her forty-odd years. She seemed to have grown younger in the past five years since her husband had died and, on the remnants of

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an estate, she had started the motor court and made it pay.

She was amused by the pained expression that the classical music brought to Paul's square brown face. She waved him and Christie out to the patio.

"Take the portable along," she said, "and watch the moon come up to swing."

Night had closed down while they ate. The ocean, star-washed, rolled in lazily. The rhythmic break of waves muted the Washington dance band to which Paul tuned the little radio. Christie sat in a low, cushioned porch chair and looked around. More music and laughter drifted from the various guest rooms and cottages.

Only Court Merle's room was dark and still. There was a light in the cottage that he should have been sharing with Flip. The situation between those two, thought Christie, foreshadowed trouble.

She looked away and did not see Flip come out of the cottage. Paul's interested straightening caught her attention. Christie followed his fascinated gaze.

Flip was halfway across the grassy court. She had changed her scrap of a bathing suit for a short-skirted evening dress of turquoise net with a low decolletage. She carried a light coat over her arm. She was glamorous in the starlight that softened the sharpness of her face. As she approached the table, beside which Christie and Paul sat, he rose, looking dazzled. Christie smiled to herself wryly.

"Hello, children. Mind if I join you?" Flip was all affability. "It's too awful sitting alone, especially when you're a bride."

Christie introduced Paul who was the picture of startled sympathy. He brought up a chair for Flip and, resuming his own, reached to turn off the radio. She stopped him with a butterfly hand on his big brown one.

"Don't," she said. "I like dance music. I'd like to be dancing, only—"

"Why aren't you?" Paul was blunt, as always. "Where's your bridegroom?"

Flip's glance slid around to Christie. "You'd know more about that than I do," she said, malice creeping out. "By the way, where is the boy friend?"

"Asleep, I imagine. Wake him, if yo wish."

Christie nodded toward his darkene room. But Flip shook her dark hea violently.

"It wouldn't go me any good," sh said. "Anyhow I wouldn't dare. He' be furious, and you can't imagine wha Court Merle's like when he's furiou Sometimes I get scared just thinkin what he may do to me, or drive me to d to myself."

She shivered realistically, whil Christie suppressed an exclamation disbelief. It had been apparent tha Court Merle had a temper, but it seeme under control. She could not picture hir hurting a girl.

"That's bad," said Paul. He was deep ly impressed.

Flip sat, small and fragile, in the ir direct light from the lounge. She tappe one foot to the music wistfully.

"Listen, Paul—Christie!" She spok with a show of promise. "Why don't w go uptown and get a drink and a dance The party'll be on me. We'll take m car." She added to Christie, "You sa it, didn't you?"

Christie refrained from saying, "Ho could I help it?" Flip had arrived th day before in a new model roadste canary-colored, the size of a sma launch.

"Thanks." Christie vetoed the pr jected party firmly. "But I must sta here, in case someone needs somethin Mother will be going to bed shortly."

Paul, who had leaned forward in h chair eagerly, sank back. Flip turned speculative stare upon him.

"How about you, Paul?" she aske "I need so badly to get away . . . fro everything. You wouldn't mind my bo rowing him, would you, Christie?"

Christie said that he was not hers t loan. Paul said nothing. Flip jumped t her feet and did a pirouette.

"Then let's go," she cried.

She pulled Paul to his feet, tucked hand under his arm. Sheepish but n reluctant, he let himself be dragged o Five minutes later, Flip's big roadst roared out of the motor court. Christ grimaced. It was just as well, she r flected, that the accommodations Paul's crude fishing and hunting lod

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were not the kind to attract glamor girls.

WITH the radio turned to a whisper, Christie sat alone and watched the moon build a golden path to the restless sea. The motor court quieted. Lights went out, her mother's included, one by one. She shut off the radio entirely and listened to the pound of the surf, eyes closed.

"May I join you?"

She opened her eyes to find Court Merle standing over her, tall in the moonlight. When she nodded in speechless answer to his polite question, he took the chair that Paul had vacated. He wore a sports shirt open at the throat, slacks and sneakers. He looked rested and at peace with the world.

"You had a good sleep," she said.

"I needed it. I feel wonderful now, except—" he grinned ruefully—"a little hungry."

"There are still some restaurants open uptown," said Christie.

"Would you ride along and help me find one?" he asked, after a moment of consideration.

Christie repeated the excuse that she had given earlier to Flip. It had never been more than an excuse. With the *No Vacancy* sign up, she was not needed at the motor court, but Court Merle put up no argument. Neither did he show any signs of leaving by himself. He produced cigarettes and offered her one, lighted it for her.

"You really should," said Christie, "have some dinner."

"I don't like eating alone."

There was a note of mild stubbornness in his voice. She regarded him with a mixture of exasperation and concern, and came to a decision.

"If you'll be quiet and not wake up my mother," she said, "I'll fix you a bite in the kitchen. I think we have some cold chicken in the icebox."

"I should be a gentleman and tell you not to bother, but—" he chuckled boyishly—"I'm too hungry. And I'll promise to be a mouse when it comes to quiet."

She found not only cold chicken in the icebox but potato salad left over from lunch. She made coffee, while he sat at the table covered with the red oilcloth that Chloe fancied, and watched. His darkly blue eyes were happy, and warm. Christie poured him a cup of coffee and tried to banish the intimacy of the moment.

"Cream and sugar, Mr. Merle?"

"Just sugar. And couldn't we—" His grin was coaxing—"make it Court and Christie? And, please, have a cup of coffee with me."

"Okay, Court."

It seemed foolish to quibble in a kitchen. Christie sat down at the opposite end of the table and drank a cup of coffee with the strange feeling that, in another life, they had sat thus together and would sit again often. It was a foolish feeling. Dangerous. Deliberately, Christie brought Flip into the room.

"You should have waked up earlier," she said. "You could have gone uptown with your wife."

"My wife?" he repeated vaguely. Then, "Oh, you mean Flip. I heard her car go out, hitting on all cylinders."

HE DID not sound in the least disturbed. Christie rose and began piling dishes into the sink. What kind of husband was he? She decided that he was not the kind of whom she approved. She refused coldly his offer to help her with the scant dishwashing.

"You might as well run along and catch up on your lost rest," she told him.

"I don't want to run along," he said. "I want to talk with you, explain. Things aren't what they seem with me."

"Things are not what they seem," Christie quoted flippantly from a grade school memory. "Isn't that a poem?"

"Maybe. Please come outside with me again, Christie, where we can talk. It's important."

He took the dish towel, with which she was finished, and hung it up. Hard fingers insistent upon her bare arm, he guided her back to the patio. He ignored the chairs by the table and drew her over to a glider swing that was out of range of light from the lounge.

"We can talk here, with less chance of disturbing people," he said.

Weakly, Christie told herself that it was her duty to listen to what he had to say. She should find out what went on

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between him and Flip. They were strange guests. But Christie was too honest to fool herself completely. In her heart of hearts, she knew that she had come out with him because she wanted to be with him. She was frightened and ashamed. When Court leaned back in the swing and showed no inclination to begin talking, she prompted him a little angrily.

"You had something to discuss with me?" she said. "There's perhaps something we can do for you and . . . your wife?"

Court crushed out the cigarette that he had just lighted. "Flip," he said startlingly, "is not my wife. She's Philippa Leyson, nobody's wife as far as I know."

Christie stared. She was conscious of a vast relief that was succeeded by shocked indignation.

"Then what are you and she—"

"Down here together for?" Court finished the question. "We're not. Flip came down alone. She knows this beach. She stayed up at one of the big hotels once with her father. She probably couldn't get in this time, having no reservation, so she holes up with you."

"But why should she register as your wife?" asked Christie. "What are you doing here?"

Court brought up a sigh from the soles of his sneakers. "I'm down here," he said, "to haul Flip home to her father, who's been a father to me since I was ten, when my own folks cracked up in a plane. He helped put me through college, recommended me to the firm of architects that I'm working with. In return, I've played big brother and nursemaid to his problem child. And Flip Leyson is a problem child. No foolin'. As for her registering as Mrs. Courtenay Merle—"

He paused to light another cigarette. He looked embarrassed and, suddenly, very young and appealing. Christie had a desire to reach out and put a hand on his arm.

"A month or so ago," he went on, "Flip got the idea—she's always getting crazy ideas—that she'd like to be Mrs. Court Merle. There was nothing personal about it. She didn't want me, really. Try to understand that."

Christie tried, and could not. He was sweet in his confusion and earnestness. His dark nearness tugged at her. Sitting close to him, she could not imagine any girl not wanting him . . . really. He frowned, trying to explain.

CHAPTER III

STOOGE

FLIP LEYSON had inherited a considerable fortune from her grandmother but it would not come into her hands until she was thirty, unless she married before then with her father's approval. So far Mr. Leyson had, justifiably, turned thumbs down on her prospective husbands. There had been a series. A piano player, a professional baseball player, a self-styled White Russian count.

"The last one, Dicky Comar, whom she fancied herself in love with last winter and spring," said Court, "wasn't so bad. He's got no money of his own, but he's got a rich father. The trouble is that he's another problem child like herself. After he flunked out of Princeton this year, his old man and Mr. Leyson got together and ordered no marriage for him and Flip. The kids could have got married, of course. They're old enough, but neither have the nerve to face marriage without money. That's where I came in."

"How?" Christie did not yet have a clear picture.

"Simple," said Court. "Mr. Leyson would approve of me as a husband. Flip would be given control of her money. After that, she could do as she pleased. Probably she had it in mind to divorce me, as soon as she was independent."

"Oh, no! How could she?" Christie's protest was involuntary.

Court gave her a quick searching look and his seriousness was lost in his grin. "You darling," he said softly, and dropped an arm about her shoulders. Christie blushed in the moonlight. She had revealed emotions whose existence she was just beginning to realize.

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Holding her lightly, Court picked up his story. "The trouble was I want to marry for keeps, when I marry. I wouldn't be her stooge, although she threw hysterics and tantrums. Flip is used to having her own way. When she doesn't get it she pulls wild stunts, like coming down here and registering as my wife."

"You could have denied it, when you arrived," said Christie.

He agreed soberly. "I didn't want to make a fool of her, though," he said. "I owe too much to her old man. Then, too, I've got in the habit of covering up for the girl. I thought I could get her to come home, without telling anyone how hard she'd tried to marry a man who had no intention of marrying her."

"But you're telling me." Christie's voice came low.

"Don't you know why?"

Court's arm tightened around her. He tossed away the cigarette that had burned to a stub in his free hand. Then both his arms were around her. His dark young face was close and his blue eyes very near.

"Christie, I saw you and knew that you were the girl. I couldn't let you go on believing that I belonged to someone else. Darling. . . ."

HIS voice died away, as his mouth took hers. He kissed her slowly and deeply, and stars fell out of the sky and spun around her head. It was madness, but such wonderful madness. Christie closed her eyes and gave him back his kiss.

The sound of a powerful car roaring into the rear drive of the motor court startled them apart. Court stood up and reached for a cigarette.

"Flip," he said. "We'd better not let her know how things are with us, until I get her started for home. She has a genius for making trouble."

What he advised was sensible, but Christie was vaguely hurt. In spite of the kiss they had just shared, he was continuing to protect Flip. Mechanically, she smoothed her hair and assumed an expression of calm. Court went over and turned on the radio.

They were yards apart when Flip came through the lounge with Paul Coleman at her heels. She did not see Christie immediately. Court was in plain sight.

"My husband!" she cried dramatically. She made a show of throwing herself upon him, as she had earlier.

"Cut it!" Court held her off. "I'm not in the mood."

"Did you hear that?" Flip whirled upon Paul, who stood watching avidly. "See how he treats me? Do you wonder now—" She broke off, as the swing creaked and she discovered Christie. Flip put her hands on her hips. "Well," she said significantly. "Well, well. I hope we're not interrupting."

"That's enough, Flip." Court took a fierce step toward her.

She squealed. "All right, hit me! Hit me—"

"Maybe I will." Court's temper was thoroughly aroused. "I should."

Christie stood up. She felt a little sickened by the scene and wanted to hear no more. Paul was tense, and might interfere. She walked over and took him by the arm, turned him around.

"We'd better let them settle it," she said. "I'll walk out to the truck with you."

He submitted to the quiet authority in her voice and let himself be led away from the patio. He climbed into his pick-up uncertainly, while Christie waited.

"I don't like leaving like this." He delayed starting to protest. "That poor little thing."

Christie eyed him grimly. "Don't be a fool, Paul," she told him. "The poor little thing has been around more than you have. She can take care of herself."

"Not against a man who beats her," said Paul.

"Don't believe everything you hear." Christie was scornful of his credulity. She was tempted to tell him the real situation between Flip and Court Merle, but the story was not hers to tell. She said merely, "A girl can lie."

"Maybe, but Flip's a swell girl," said Paul. "And I don't like to leave her unprotected, after the swell time she showed me tonight."

"Where did you go?" Christie sought to distract him. "What did you do?"

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"Drank and danced at all the best joints on the beach." Paul sounded reminiscently pleased with himself. "And the party was all on her. She's a generous little girl."

"You should hire out to an escort bureau," said Christie.

DISGUSTED with him, she turned on her heel and, after a moment of pondering her remark, Paul started his pick-up truck. He slammed out of the motor court.

Court and Flip had taken their quarrel out of the patio. Christie refused to look either at his room or the cottage in the pines, in an effort to figure out where they had gone. She felt exhausted, and sure of nothing.

Tossing in bed, she tried to recapture the magic of Court's mouth on hers but she had small success. She kept remembering Flip and the unnatural hold that she had upon him.

Christie slept fitfully and wakened to a busy day. It was Saturday. There were numerous check-outs to make room for week-end reservations. Court did not appear until mid-morning. She was in the lounge working on statements, when he came to the door. He was wide-shouldered and narrow-hipped in bathing trunks.

"How about a swim?" he asked.

He sounded aggravatingly cheerful. Christie pointed to the ledger over which she was poring, and shook her head. Court continued his progress to the beach alone. She had the small satisfaction of noticing that her quiet dismissal had taken some of the jauntiness out of his bearing.

Christie was glad of her duties which kept them apart. She did not want to be disturbed further by Mr. Courtenay Merle, until he was rid of Mrs. Courtenay Merle. Flip might only claim to be his wife, but she was a problem in his life. She might always be one. Somberly, Christie faced that possibility.

There were no signs of activity in Flip's cottage. She was evidently a late riser. She had stayed in bed, the previous day, until after one o'clock, then demanded breakfast.

Court came back after swimming an hour, and again stopped at the door of the lounge. This time he wanted t know how about laying off work ar having breakfast with him. Christ told him that she had breakfasted.

"Chloe," she said, "will serve you i your room or out in the yard, as yo prefer."

Christie's voice was cool, and Cou looked boyishly unhappy. He was pe ceptive enough to understand what wa wrong.

"I don't blame you for being sore he said. "A wonderful night ended on pretty sour note. But it will be diffe ent today. I'm going to have a sho down with Flip, as soon as the litt hellion gets out of the sack."

He blew a kiss through the door promise, and Christie's spirits took lift. She gave him a fugitive smile b fore he went on to his room to dress.

CHAPTER IV

MURDEROUS INTENT

ON THE cou yard the s was warm a inviting. It would fun to have a seco breakfast out the with Court. Chris was toying with tem tation, when the poli car drove in. She we to the door and saw the stout poli chief of the town ease his bulk to t walk. He was followed by an officer uniform. Their manner was busines like.

Christie was alarmed. Gaylord's-b the-Sea and its guests had never giv the police occasion to visit the mot court, but there was always the pos bility of lawbreakers taking refuge i side its gates. She greeted the chief his name, as he entered the lounge.

"Good morning, Mr.—Chief H comb."

He took off his hat and ran a ha over thinning hair. He was a Southe gentleman and did not like to distu women. "Sorry to bother you, M Gaylord," he said. "But I'm afra we've got to do some asking and loo ing around. We got a note today, in t

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second mail. Sounds like something may have been happening here."

Christie's face showed utter bewilderment that was reflected in her mother's. Mrs. Gaylord had either seen or heard the police and come from her rooms to investigate.

"See for yourselves," said Chief Holcomb.

He took a thin letter from his wallet. While he extracted the enclosure from its envelope, Christie noticed that the stationery was that supplied by the motor court.

"It looks," he said, "like it was mailed early this morning by somebody checking out. Some cautious bird who wanted us to know that there were goings-on here, but didn't want to get mixed up in any police business. He didn't sign his name and he printed instead of wrote. It may not mean a thing but we've got to investigate."

Both Christie and her mother were frantic with anxiety before he held up the note. They read it together. It ran, crudely printed:

Better go down to Gaylord's-by-the-Sea. You will find that Mrs. Courtenay Merle, who registered there two days ago has disappeared. She may be in the ocean. Advise questioning her husband who arrived last night. We heard quarreling and funny sounds in the night.

"Flip and Court," gasped Christie. She looked at Mrs. Gaylord, who said, "We do have some Courtenay Merles, but they're both right here. Aren't they?"

The chief told her gently that that was what they must find out. "Suppose we look for this Courtenay Merle first," he suggested.

"You won't have to look far." The patio door opened to admit Court, cool in shorts and singlet. "What's up?"

"Where's your wife?" asked the chief.

"I haven't got a wife." Court sensed a serious situation, and was frank. "If you're looking for a Miss Philippa Leyson, who registered as my wife, as a stunt, I assume she's in her cottage. Her car's outside."

He indicated Flip's yellow roadster which she had not bothered to take out of the drive the night before. Chief Holcomb nodded non-committally.

"Maybe her car's here, but that doesn't prove anything," he said.

Court stepped up to him. "Just what is this all about?"

For answer, the chief held up the note, but more carefully than he had before Christie and her mother. Court's face darkened with anger as he read.

"The little devil!" he burst out. "She wrote that herself. She threatened to get me into trouble. If I ever get my hands on her—"

"Maybe you've already had your hands on her," said Chief Holcomb mildly. "Suppose you explain what you're doing down here with a girl who isn't your wife."

COURT took a long breath. He was seething, but he repeated as calmly as he could the story that he had told to Christie the night before. It had sounded fantastic in moonlight. In mid-day, with the police listening skeptically, it sounded incredible.

The realization seemed to come to Court. He said, "Her father will back me up. A. J. Leyson, New York."

Chief Holcomb wrote down the name, explaining, "If the little lady isn't around, we may have to telephone him."

Consternation spread over Court's face. "You can't, not for two weeks. He's taking a vacation in Maine, a canoe trip. Otherwise when Flip telephoned me long distance the other night, I'd have let him come after her. As it is—"

Mrs. Gaylord spoke up unexpectedly, and Christie could have hugged her. "I think the young man is telling the truth. Mrs. Merle, or Miss Leyson, didn't act like a young married woman to me."

The chief wondered aloud how a young married woman acted, then became brisk. "Maybe she's in her cottage, as Mr. Merle says. Let's see."

Mrs. Gaylord showed him out to the patio and accompanied him. Christie and Court followed. The uniformed policeman made a rear guard. Court moved close to Christie, and pleaded with her in a stricken whisper.

"You believe that this is just a nasty

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trick of Flip's, don't you?" he said.

Christie turned cold gray eyes upon him. "But it's happened," she told him. "And it's terrible for the court, for mother." She could see her mother glancing nervously at the curious faces that were appearing at windows and doors.

They reached Flip's cottage in the pines. Chief Holcomb rapped. Then, when there was no answer, he pushed open the unlocked door. Christie heard her mother's dismayed exclamation and hurried up.

The pretty living room of the cottage was a shambles. Chairs were overturned, clothes strewn everywhere. A spilled vase of flowers dribbled water on the pale green rug. Peering into the bedroom that Flip had used, they saw her bags partially packed. Flip was not in the cottage. The chief's pleasant face became stern.

"Looks like she was trying to make a getaway," he said, "and was stopped, hard. Now what have you got to tell us, Mr. Merle?"

Court was swearing under his breath. He interrupted himself to repeat that it was more of Flip's spoiled nastiness. "She threw things around." He spoke earnestly, although rapidly. "She wanted to make it look like there'd been a fight. It's her hope that I'll be arrested and stew in jail, while she hides out somewhere."

"Any of her bags gone?"

The chief was looking around. He addressed his question to Mrs. Gaylord and Christie who shook their heads. Flip had brought so much luggage that it was impossible to tell if any were missing.

"Where could she be hiding out?" asked the chief. "At a hotel?"

It was Court who answered that question. "Not without her duds. Flip is a clothes-hound. And she wouldn't have left her car and walked up to the beach."

"Any taxis come in last night?" Chief Holcomb was turning out to be a patient investigator.

Mrs. Gaylord, whose bedroom adjoined the drive, gave him an emphatic, "No." She was a light sleeper. She had heard Flip and Paul return from town. Hers was the last of the guest cars to come in.

"Paul's truck went out a little later, she said, "and no other cars came in o went out after his. But—" she brighened, thinking back—"a car that backfired like Paul's truck did stop for while on the highway, around two o'clock."

CHIEF HOLCOMB smoothed his hair again. He did not like any part of this. He looked at Court sadly. "I'm afraid we'll have to take you into some kind of custody, son," he decided, "until we locate your wife—that girl—or the body."

"Don't be silly!" The admonition came from Christie. She had been putting two and two together. She turned to her mother. "The car that you heard which sounded like Paul Coleman's truck stopping on the highway, was Paul's. He came back for Flip. It was probably all arranged while they were out, for him to take her down to his lodge. He wouldn't know, of course, why. She had him convinced that Court was a brute. Paul was 'rescuing' her." Christie's voice became sarcastic. "He's keeping her 'safe' at the lodge right now."

She paused for breath. There was a long reflective silence in the disordered living room of the cottage. Like a man bemused, Court came over to stand in front of Christie. He took her face between his two hands.

"You've guessed it," he said. "You're as bright as you are beautiful. Darling, you're wonderful." He kissed her full on the mouth.

The silence was broken by Mrs. Gaylord's flustered, "Really!" Chief Holcomb brought his mind back to his job.

"Has this Coleman fellow got a telephone?" he asked and, when informed that he had, he said, "We can check up."

It was obvious, however, that he believed that Christie had hit upon the explanation of Flip's disappearance. The party made a leisurely return to the lounge to use the public telephone.

The chief took down the receiver. The telephone at the motor court was an old-fashioned wall instrument. He turned the crank that summoned the operator.

"Wait!" ordered Christie.

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She had heard back-firing. She ran to the rear door with Court, her mother, and both policemen behind her. Paul Coleman's truck came to a noisy halt directly in front of their interested eyes. Paul jumped out and pulled Flip out after him.

She tried to kick him. She was crying wrathfully.

"I brought her back." Paul dragged her into the lounge. He had been made ridiculous, and was relentless. "I didn't know what she was up to, until I heard her talking on the telephone to some fellow in New York this morning—she didn't know I was around—talking and laughing with him and asking him to come and get her out of my shanty. That's what she called my lodge." He choked on his own rage.

Flip swept the lounge with defiant glance. "What are you all glaring at me for?" she demanded. "I haven't done anything so terrible."

"No?" Chief of Police Holcomb's voice was deceptively soft, very Virginian. "How about disturbing the peace, willful destruction of property? Those are just a few of the charges I'm thinking about throwing against you. All of them carry jail sentences."

Flip blinked her blue-green eyes. She was not sure that he was serious. Becoming convinced, she swung around to Court, frightened.

"Court, pal. You're not going to let him do this to me," she said wildly. "You wouldn't let him send me to jail, would you?"

"I hope," Court's grin was devilish, "that he sends you up for life. Take her away, Chief!"

"But what about Dickie?" Flip began to cry again. "That was Dickie Comar I was talking to, and he's coming down to marry me. We're going to take a chance on getting around our fathers. But Dickie can't marry me, if I'm in jail."

"I've heard of jail weddings." Chief Holcomb took her by arm firmly, although not unkindly. "Maybe we can arrange one."

SHE was escorted, sobbing, to the police car. The uniformed policeman slid behind the wheel. Watching, Christie was moved to pity. Her black-fringed gray eyes went to Court, who had ceased to grin and begun to laugh hastily.

"Aren't you a bit sorry for her?" she asked. "Won't you try to help her?"

He shook his dark head. "Let her Dickie-bird worry. The Virginia police won't be too hard on her. In any case, I've got more important things on my mind than Flip Leyson. I expect to have from now on. I hope to have."

His blue eyes caught and held hers and made his meaning clear. Her heart trembled and, unconsciously, she swayed toward him.

"Please, Christie! Mr. Merle—Court!" Christie's mother, gently admonitory, halted the near embrace. "Don't you think," asked Mrs. Gaylord, "that it would be nicer to . . . talk down on the beach where you'll be alone?"

It was a lovely suggestion. Court grinned at her mischievously, and bowed.

"Thank you . . . Mother."

He took Christie's hand, and they walked out into the sunshine. Steps led from the sea wall to the sandy beach. They sat on the bottom step and were screened from the house.

Court's arm found its way around her shoulders.

"Southern girls like courtin', don't they?" he said and, when she nodded, puzzled, he laughed softly. "Consider yourself courted," he told her, "because—"

He put his mouth to hers, and kissed her possessively. It was, she thought dreamily, the most satisfactory kind of courting.

A tiny ripple of laughter went through her, and he held her off questioningly.

"Court's kind of courting," she said, smiling at the play on words that had gone through her mind. "I like it. I like it very much."

"You'd better. There's a whole lifetime of it ahead of you. You know that, don't you? We were born in love, and—" He stopped.

Christie had tipped back her head invitingly. Her eyes were closed, and she felt the sun on her eyelids. His mouth returned to hers, and she felt the sun in her heart.

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THE MOONLIGHT TRAIL

a complete novelet by ANN ARDEN

CHAPTER I

MAN ON THE YACHT

KATHIE Walker flopped onto the canvas deck of the *Dolphin* and smiled contentedly at the *Dolphin's* owner.

"That's all the work you'll get out of me today, Captain," she said.

Bruce Kendall grinned. "Fair enough, Red. Thanks for the help."

"Think nothing of it," Kathie said. "And don't call me Red. Is it my fault if my mother was frightened by a fi engine?"

"Nope," Bruce chuckled. "But if were a female and had them there bea tiful tresses—"

"Why, Bruce Kendall! You're a poet

"—they could call me Red all th wanted to," Bruce finished. "Sure I' a poet. Anybody who lives with t sea has poetry in his soul."

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Kathie felt surprised to see how friendly Bruce was becoming with Marilee

Kathie Walker wanted Bruce Kendall to help her snare the millionaire yachtsman—but what was the use of turning on all that romantic magic when her heart kept playing tricks of its own?

Kathie laughed and closed her eyes against the brightness of the tropic sun as its rays caressed the calm Florida bay.

No doubt about it, this was definitely the life.

She had come to Florida a few months back, determined to find herself some sort of work which would let her escape another Northern winter. She had landed the perfect job here in Ocean-side, as waitress in the Nautilus Restaurant. The Nautilus was a lovely place, located right in the Yacht basin where it served as the main gathering spot for the yachting crowd which even now was pouring down from the North in their cruisers and Diesel jobs for the winter season.

But the boat she was lounging on this afternoon was no cruiser. The *Dolphin* was a forty-foot yawl, the only

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sailboat in the harbor. Bruce made his living by renting the *Dolphin* out for sailing parties. And as he had told Kathie in the past, he did pretty darned well with it.

"There are still plenty of folks who get a kick out of taking the helm with the sails wrapped full," he had explained. "And when you find a real lover of sailing ships, that's when you've found a sailor. Some of them wouldn't be caught dead on a motor boat."

Kathie opened her eyes now and looked at Bruce. He was quite something to look at, she admitted, as he stood on the gently rolling deck, hands on his hips. Above a pair of faded dungarees his powerful, bronzed frame was exposed to the sun. The deep coat of tan furnished an exciting contrast to the brilliant blondness of his hair.

The pleasant job at the Nautilus had been one happy development of Kathie's trip south. Bruce had been another. She had met him shortly after she arrived, long before the yacht parade had begun to plow down the placid waters of the Inland Waterway. And the afternoons she had spent with him aboard the *Dolphin*, while he got it ship-shape for the coming season, had been pleasant ones indeed.

FURTHERMORE it was a pleasant surprise, Kathie had convinced herself, to find a male who didn't take one look at her cascading red hair and start baying at the moon. Bruce, it seemed, was more the big-brother type. True, she had been a little miffed at first that Bruce, even after several dates, hadn't done more than give her a few mild kisses with no sting in them. For a gal who was used to doling out her caresses in small driblets, it was rather a shock to have Bruce kiss her casually from time to time, and then turn immediately to some subject such as sailfishing or alligators.

But—that was Bruce. And she was sure she liked the procedure, as a welcome relief from the usual wrestling matches. That is . . . she was *almost* sure she liked it.

Her dreamy thoughts were interrupted by a sharp blast from a deep-throated horn. She turned in time to see the causeway bridge rise slowly then pause as a magnificent yacht, bright with varnish and polished brass, moved majestically into the inner harbor.

"Wow!" Kathie breathed. "That's quite a hunk of boat."

"One of the sweetest you'll see here all season," Bruce agreed. "That's the *Shawnee*."

"The *Shawnee*," Kathie said blankly. "Is that magic name supposed to make me fall over in a faint?"

"Sorry," Bruce laughed. "I keep forgetting you haven't survived a full winter season down here yet. As a matter of fact, the name could very well make you fall over in a faint, if you knew the setup. The *Shawnee* happens to belong to none other than young Mr. Clyde Holcombe himself."

"I'm still not impressed," Kathie murmured, "but I'm beginning to be. Is that the lad at the rail?" Her gaze fastened on a tall, slender figure in white flannel slacks, a blue coat and a white yachting cap.

"That's the lad at the rail," Bruce replied. "He's Judd Holcombe's only offspring, and the old man hands out enough moola for his personal use to stuff an elephant with. And on top of it all, he's not a bad kid."

"On top of it all he's a heck of a good-looking kid," Kathie mused as the yacht drifted past. She could get a close look at young Mr. Clyde Holcombe now, and what she saw was plenty to keep her staring.

Then Clyde Holcombe's eye caught hers. And he smiled.

It took no urging at all to make Kathie smile back!

"Whoof!" she exhaled. "Pardon me while I search for my equilibrium. Say, what's that boy got, anyway?"

"What's he got?" Bruce repeated. "Well, several things. Including a few hundred assorted girl friends who would be just tickled to death to commit matrimony with his papa's bank account. Papa, by the way, is also a nice Joe. He charters this crate of mine once in a while during the season."

"What does anybody that handsome need with a wealthy papa?" Kathie said dreamily.

"Say, you seem rather intrigued,"

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Bruce said. "Don't tell me you're thinking of joining the chase?"

"Don't be so clinical, Kendall." Then she added: "But as a matter of fact, I suppose you think I couldn't get somewhere if I wanted to."

"Oh, I wouldn't say that," Bruce said, and grinned.

"But you're thinking it."

He regarded her quizzically. "Want to try it?"

"I probably would," she said defiantly, "just to show you it could be done. Only, there's no way I could ever meet him."

"But there is," Bruce said. "In fact, you've got a chance some of the local gals would sell their souls for."

"I don't get you."

"The restaurant, foolish. All the visiting yachtsmen hang out at the Nautilus. I wouldn't be surprised if friend Holcombe showed up there for dinner tonight."

"Sa-a-ay," Kathie breathed. "Maybe you've got something there."

"You're not really taking all this seriously, are you?" Bruce said. "I just meant it as a gag."

But Kathie tossed her head defiantly. "It still might end up as just a gag," she said. "Then again, it might not. For your information, chum, that one look at Mr. Clyde Holcombe packed quite a wallop. It's the kind of sensation I might like to have repeated!"

She didn't mind talking this way to Bruce, of course. Bruce could never take a thing like love seriously, and this wasn't love anyway. This was just an intriguing idea to play around with, that's all. It was like going to a movie and dreaming you were being kissed by Tyrone Power. That didn't mean you ever expected such a dream to come true, but it was good, clean fun to think about it anyway.

However, there was a slight difference between Clyde Holcombe and Tyrone Power, so far as Kathie Walker was concerned. Tyrone Power was thousands of miles away somewhere, while Clyde Holcombe was right here in this very town of Oceanside, Florida!

She was humming to herself later at the restaurant as she slipped on her pert little tan and maroon uniform. It set off her trim figure to perfection, and the absurd little cap which perched jauntily atop her head made no pretense of covering the flaming red hair.

The dinner crowd began to arrive early tonight. Each day the rush of business was steadily increasing as the winter visitors poured into town. For a while Kathie was much too busy to give even a passing thought to males of any description, beyond the ones who were ordering roast beef or Florida lobster.

BUT at a little after seven she happened to glance at the door and caught her breath. The same little gremlin who had played a happy tune on her heart-strings that afternoon went to work again. And Kathie watched excitedly as Clyde Holcombe—delightfully alone—let the gushing hostess lead him to a table overlooking the water and deposit him there.

Kathie did some swift figuring. That was Ellen's table. She looked around quickly, didn't see Ellen, and hastened into the kitchen. Ellen was at the pastry counter.

"Hi, sweet," she said brightly. "How's it going?"

"Hi, Kathie," Ellen said and smiled. "Pretty well, I guess. Why?"

"I was just thinking of something. You were talking about wanting to switch your next day off around to Wednesday. Do you still want to?"

"Gee, you bet I do. Hank gets to town that day."

"Say no more. It's a deal. I'll take over for you."

"Oh, swell! Golly, that's a break!"

"On one condition," Kathie said with mock sternness. "Swap tables with me for tonight."

"Oh-oh," Ellen laughed. "What's his name?"

"What do you care? You've got Hank coming in on Wednesday. Remember?"

"I bet it's Clyde Holcombe," Ellen said.

Kathie gasped. "Are you a mind reader? Or did you see him come in?"

"Neither," Ellen said. "But I know he arrived this afternoon, and this is one of his favorite hangouts every winter."

"But, but there must be a hundred

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other men out there you could have guessed!"

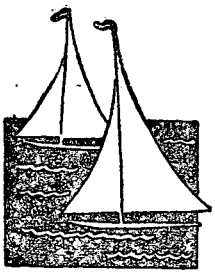
"They don't look like Clyde Holcombe," Ellen sighed. "Sure, honey, you take over. But you're beating your heart against a brick wall. He's a swell guy, but he's a chronic bachelor. Believe me, we girls here in town have found that out—the hard way!"

"I'll take my chances," Kathie said, and paused in front of a mirror to give the little cap another last-minute adjustment.

"Here we go," she whispered, and went back out into the dining room.

CHAPTER II

BLONDE COMPETITOR



SHE picked up a menu and approached Clyde Holcombe's table. Now that the yachting cap was hung on a rack, she could see that Clyde had black hair, wonderfully smooth black hair which swept back from his forehead. And she was not surprised, after Ellen's report, to find that he was just as handsome as she had imagined from the brief glance that afternoon. Maybe even more handsome!

He was gazing out over the yacht basin, quiet now in the approaching dusk. "Good evening," Kathie said brightly, trying to keep her voice steady.

"Oh, good evening," Clyde Holcombe said, giving her a warm smile which threw her into a state of complete confusion. She groped for the beautiful, smart speeches she was all set to make, and missed them all. In desperation she thrust out the menu and merely said: "Here."

"Thanks," Clyde said. "Do I know you from last winter?"

"I'm afraid not. I only arrived a few months ago."

"You've still got the edge on me for this season. I just pulled in today."

"I know," Kathie said. "I saw you." He looked at her and his eyes widened. "Oh, that's right. You're the girl on the sailboat. I remember that hair. It's quite some hair, by the way, especially when the sun hits it."

"Well, thanks!" Kathie said gleefully. "Shall I consider myself flattered?"

"If you wouldn't think it was pretty corny, I'd say you don't need flattery. And it's still true, whether you think it's corny or not."

She drifted back to the kitchen with his order carefully written down. She didn't trust herself to remember anything, not after that concentrated dose of personality. Bruce had been right. He *was* a nice guy, as nice as you could want to meet. And what's more, he seemed in a mood to make friends.

Kathie had no objections whatever to that!

As the meal progressed, Clyde continued to talk to her. She was at his table every free moment she could find. Clyde learned her name, where she was from and just about every pertinent detail concerning Kathie Walker from the cradle up to the present.

But the best was yet to come. Kathie brought him his check and thought that would be the end of the whole business. Instead, Clyde smiled at her.

"This is a long shot," he said, "and I can't say I expect it to work, seeing as how I just met you tonight. But—"

"But what?"

"Well, I was wondering if you'd like to come out on the yacht with me for a moonlight sail later on."

"Ooooh!" she breathed. "Golly, that sounds wonderful!"

"You'll do it?"

"I'd love to. Of course, I'm working here until nine-thirty, but if the offer still goes after that, it's accepted."

"Lady, you've got yourself a date. I'll be back for you at nine-thirty sharp." He grinned. "And if you're not waiting for me, I'll call out the harbor patrol to track you down."

"Don't worry," Kathie whispered as she watched his tall figure stride out of the restaurant. "I assure you that won't be necessary!"

The balance of the evening crawled by with mocking slowness. When nine-thirty rolled around, she did a lightning job of slipping out of her uniform and

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into the little flower print dress she had worn to the Nautilus that night. It was a simple affair, but a cute one. Apparently Clyde approved of it. He gave her a fast once-over when he came by for her and it was obvious that he liked what he saw.

He led her down the long dock to where his yacht was made fast, and helped her aboard. A few minutes later they were gliding over the gently rolling ground swell, while the motors of the sleek craft droned a symphony of power.

"Dad always kids me about liking motors," he said, his slender hands resting easily on the wheel. "Monkey wrench sailor, he calls me. His hobby is plain old-fashioned sailboats."

"I've heard that," Kathie said, glorying in the tang of the salt air.

"You've heard about my father?" he said curiously. "How?"

"Friend of mine told me," she teased.

He thought for a moment, then nodded. "Oh sure. The boat you were on when I saw you this afternoon. Does what's-his-name still own it?"

"Bruce Kendall, if that's who you mean."

"Kendall. Sure. Dad's gone sailing with him for years. I've met him once or twice. Seems to be a nice guy."

"Everybody's nice in Florida in the winter," Kathie said dreamily.

Clyde let one hand leave the wheel and an arm stole around Kathie's shoulders. She debated drawing away. But it was a strange debate—because she found herself arguing in the negative!

"You really like it down here, don't you?" he said, as though nothing had happened.

"Love it," Kathie said. "When I remember all those winters I've spent battling my way through slush and flu germs, it makes me shudder."

"Think you'll stay?"

"Through the season, anyway. I know that much."

"I'll be here that long too," Clyde said, and added: "This is already beginning to shape up as one of the best seasons in Florida history."

Kathie's pulse was pounding crazily. "You wouldn't mean," she murmured, "that just my being here could cause any such sweeping judgment as that?"

"I'd like to know why not," Clyde said.

She looked at him and their eyes met. He was just handing her a line, she realized. It wasn't supposed to be taken seriously, and she wasn't taking it seriously.

Any more than she should take it seriously when his arm tightened around her and drew her close and his lips found hers. . . .

It was a few seconds, or a few hours, later when her mind stopped whirling enough for her to do some thinking. She realized—deliciously—that she was being thoroughly kissed. She further realized that it was a very pleasant sensation indeed. But her thoughts, once prodded to action, went further.

"Hey, snap out of it," she told herself sternly. "First time you meet the boy you let him get you out on the big bad ocean and make love to you. Not only that, but you don't even pretend to put up any fight! Snap out of it, Kathie girl. This isn't the real you at all."

Snap out of it. That was the thing to do. Step back. Draw away from those warm young lips. Good advice.

So she did it—three minutes later. And once she had escaped from Clyde's embrace, her heart pulled out of its tailspin and managed to level off.

"I'm sorry, Kathie," Clyde said.

His words hit her ears with a thud. "Sorry?"

"Yes. I'm sure you must have all the wrong idea of why I brought you out here tonight."

"Oh, I wasn't too worried," she managed to say. But she was a little sore at him. Maybe he was being a nice guy to apologize, but why in the world did he think an apology was necessary? She didn't.

Gee whiz, the world would be better off with a few good old-fashioned romantic heels running around loose!

But Clyde apparently was not one of them. "I'm really sorry," he insisted. "The *Shawnee*, I assure you, is not a floating lovers lane. That particular kiss just happened."

"Okay," Kathie said.

"It won't happen again tonight."

"Darn!" Kathie said—to herself.

Nevertheless, she had no complaints

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with the evening as a whole. And when she reported to the Nautilus the next day for the luncheon period, she was feeling thoroughly contented. She had seen Clyde Holcombe, she had met Clyde Holcombe and she had been kissed by Clyde Holcombe—all within the breath-taking space of eight hours. What more could a gal ask?

Her happiness lasted until exactly twelve forty-three. It was at that point, as indicated by the clock over the main entrance, when Clyde Holcombe once more came into the Nautilus Restaurant. But it was a different Clyde in one respect: The Clyde who came in for lunch today was not alone.

Clinging to his arm like a strand of Dixie honeysuckle was a girl. A girl with soft, taffy-brown hair and large brown eyes. A girl who kept those big brown eyes fastened on Clyde Holcombe's handsome face as though she owned the face and all what went with it!

"Oh-oh," Kathie muttered under her breath. "Hey, Ellen. C'mere."

Ellen deposited a tray of empties and stepped close. "That's Exhibit A of what I tried to tell you last night," Ellen whispered, guessing Kathie's question even before Kathie had asked it. "No kidding, you've really taken on a job if you've entered the Holcombe Sweepstakes."

"Don't make it sound so cut-and-dried," Kathie said vehemently. "Besides, Mr. Holcombe's girl friends are no concern of mine. No concern whatever."

"But what's her name anyway?" she added in spite of herself.

"I thought so," Ellen chuckled. "So you don't care a hoot about his other girl friends, do you?"

"Dog-gone it, stop teasing me and tell me who she is!"

"The name is Marilee Pennington," Ellen said. "She's a local product, and she seems to be the leading contender. She latches on to friend Holcombe the minute he hits town every winter, and hangs on for dear life. This is her third season, and if she doesn't land herself a wedding ring this time, Oceanside will be sizzling."

"Sounds ominous," Kathie said unhappily. "But she looks like the helpless type. Could she really generate that much steam?"

Ellen picked up a bottle of pepper sauce and regarded it thoughtfully. "The sharpest claws in the world can still be hidden in fur lined mittens, can't they?"

Kathie knew what she meant. And she didn't try to wangle Clyde's table today. Instead, she was forced to watch from a distance as Marilee Pennington leaned across the table for the better part of an hour, fluttering her lashes at Clyde. Marilee appeared to be just too sweet for anything. So sweet that Kathie could cheerfully have squashed a lemon into that peaches-and-cream complexion.

CHAPTER III

Beach Picnic

CLYDE didn't show up at all for the dinner hour and by the time nine thirty rolled around Kathie was more frustrated than ever. So she did what she had done many times before when frustrations of one sort or another had caught up with her. She took her problems out to the *Dolphin* and dumped them into the lap of Bruce Kendall.

Bruce listened sympathetically, but there was a faint smile of amusement on his face. Kathie finished her story and then flared. "What's so funny?" she demanded. "Love ain't no joke, junior! Not that you'd know."

"Check." Bruce nodded. "I wouldn't know. And, not knowing, I do think it's pretty funny. Besides, what makes you so sure you're in love with this character, after only one evening with him?"

"In the first place, Kendall, he's not a character. In the second place, when a man kisses me the way he did, I don't need a lot of time to decide whether I liked it or not."

"Oh," Bruce said. "So he kissed you. Pretty good hitting, for his first time at bat. What sort of kiss was it?"

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"Which one?" Kathie said. "I mean—first or last?"

"I know what you mean, sugarlump," Bruce said and grinned. "Let's stick to the first one. That's usually the one that does the job. Was it like this?"

And before Kathie knew what was happening, Bruce had swept her close to him and was pressing his lips to hers. When she caught on to the deal, she disengaged her right hand and made a move to slap his face with it. But something went wrong. The hand passed his face and went on to wrap itself around his neck. Her other arm followed the same traitorous procedure, and her eyes closed.

It was a very disturbing experience.

And it ended as quickly as it began. Bruce, not Kathie, broke the clinch.

"Like that?" he asked.

"Something like that," she replied faintly.

"Okay," Bruce said, pulling out a pipe and lighting it as though nothing whatever had happened. "Now we know what the problem is, and we can figure out how to solve it."

Kathie sat down on the hatch cover and smiled in spite of herself. No doubt about it, Bruce was quite a guy. She remained there motionless for a long time, gazing out across the harbor. Lights from automobiles moving along the causeway sent dancing paths of orange across the calm water. It was a warm night, a peaceful night.

"Now," Bruce said. "I suppose you want a little briefing on your chief opposition."

"You mean Marilee Pennington?"

"I certainly do. If you're really launching this campaign in earnest, she's the babe you'll have to beat out."

"Well, I wouldn't say exactly I was launching any campaign."

"The thunder you wouldn't," Bruce said, laughing softly. Kathie got sore all over again. But she needed Bruce's advice and she held her temper in check.

"Pennington," he went on, "is the cuddly type—with claws. Ellen apparently gave you a pretty fair picture of her. She's a little Southern gal who can act so coy and helpless she can make you just want to hug her to pieces. And the only trouble with doing just that is that you never know when you're liable to come out of the clinch with a knife in your ribs. If you know what I mean."

"I think I do," Kathie said, her own eyes beginning to flash dangerously.

"Most of these Southern girls are strictly from heaven," Bruce explained. "Any male who's lucky enough to marry one is grabbing himself a slice of Paradise. But the guy who marries Marilee Pennington will be locking himself in a room with a time bomb—and throwing the key away."

"Meaning what, Mr. Kendall?"

"M e a n i n g," Bruce said, "that I woudn't wish any such fate as that on anybody. Especially not on a poor, harmless kid like Clyde Holcombe."

"Say, wait a minute. He's not so harmless."

"Okay, supply your own description. What I'm trying to tell you is that I'll help you land him for yourself."

Kathie stared. "Well, fan my brow!" she wheezed. "Now I've heard everything. You mean *you* will help *me* go after *him?*"

"That's what you want, isn't it?"

"Well, yes," Kathie admitted. But she wasn't too pleased. Sure, Bruce was just a good pal to her, and all that. But did it mean he had to be so all-fired anxious to throw her into another man's arms? That was a heck of a note!

Nevertheless, she accepted Bruce's offer of aid, and he told her to come back the next afternoon for further instructions. "And bring your bathing suit," he ordered.

She did so. Bruce already had his swimming trunks on, and she slipped down to the cabin to change to her own two-piece outfit. It was a microscopic affair of bright green, and it formed a delightful contrast to the red hair, which Kathie let the wind toy with, except when she was actually in the water.

But apparently she was due for some swimming at once. "Put your cap on," Bruce ordered. "We're going places."

"Where?" Kathie asked.

"Clyde's got Shortening-Bread Pennington out on the yacht with him. He's moored right over there. We're going to pay them a little social call."

"Hold the phone," Kathie protested. "I don't want to go barging in on the

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guy, especially not if Marilee is out there too."

"Stop worrying, Red. I know Marilee from way back. She and I haunted the same schools, before her old man decided a finishing school up North was more fitting for his little daughter. If they had really finished her, I'd have been in favor of the idea."

"All right, you know Marilee. I still don't like to move in on Clyde this way, after I've only just met him."

"I know Clyde too," Bruce said. "I told you his old man was one of my best customers."

"But—Bruce!"

"Hit the water, you land-lubber," Bruce said, and gave her a push. Kathie squealed and went overboard. When she came up, she saw Bruce's tanned form knifing through the water in the direction of the *Shawnee*. She shrugged and followed.

Clyde had recognized them before they arrived, and was waiting at the rail, a broad smile on his face. "Hello, Kendall, how are you?" he said to Bruce enthusiastically. And he seemed even more enthusiastic as he added, "Hi, Kathie. Gee, this was a swell idea, you two dropping over. Climb aboard."

Kathie did so, and for the first time she got a good look at Marilee Pennington. Marilee was sitting in a deep wicker chair, her legs crossed beneath a pink crepe dress of new-look-plus-three-inches length. A cocktail languished in her soft white hand. And her glance met Kathie's.

Everything else about Marilee was softly feminine, but not that glance. It was as hard as a chunk of granite.

Clyde came back into focus to introduce the girls, and the granite gave way to magnolia blossoms. "Mighty glad to know you, Kathie," she purred for Clyde's benefit. "I really am."

"She really is," Bruce chimed in. "Sho-nuff. Greetings, Marilee."

"Hello, Bruce," the girl said coolly. "It's been a long time."

"A right smart stretch," Bruce agreed. "Hope you folks don't mind our joining you this way."

"I should say not," Clyde said, still smiling. Marilee tried to look pleased too, but it was a bleak attempt.

Clyde ducked into the galley and appeared with more drinks. "All the comforts of home," he said and grinned.

"You can say that again," Kathie breathed. "Golly, this is really the life. And this boat is a dream."

"Kathie and I took a spin night before last," Clyde said to Marilee with amazing innocence. "She seems to go for life on the bounding main."

"How interesting," Marilee managed, the granite look leaping back into her eyes. She apparently decided that some sort of counter-attack was indicated, for she added: "Of course, Clyde's just the best little old skipper in the world, aren't you, honey?" And she beamed at him.

Kathie re-loaded and fired back. "He certainly is," she said sweetly. "He can do a mighty fine job of one-armed steering, too."

Marilee and Bruce choked simultaneously on their drinks. Kathie was beginning to enjoy herself.

But it wasn't until twenty minutes later that she learned Bruce's real reason for this accidental-on-purpose excursion. He tried to make it sound as though the thought had just occurred to him.

"Say, I've got a great idea!" he burst out, in the middle of one of the more painful silences. "Why don't the four of us go up the beach some day soon and do some real swimming. Take a picnic lunch and make an outing of it. How does that sound?"

Kathie cringed. Golly, she knew Bruce wanted to help, but he was carrying things a lot too far there. Clyde would catch on. He'd think they were ganging up on him, trying to set some sort of a trap!

But much to her amazement, Clyde leaped at the idea. "Swell!" he enthused. "We'd love to. Wouldn't we, Marilee?"

It was obvious that what Marilee would really love to have done was conk Bruce over the head with an ax. But Clyde had already called the shots. She had to follow along now, or risk having Clyde subjected to more of Kathie's red-headed charm. Kathie's remark about the one-armed steering had done its work.

"You know me, Clyde darling," she

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purred. "I just adore the beach. Simply adore it."

"Friday morning then," Bruce said. "And you can just adore to your little old heart's content, honey-lamb."

Clyde smiled vaguely. Kathie sensed the rage seething beneath Marilee's oh-so-sweet exterior, and she felt like celebrating.

But the swimming party, when Friday finally rolled around, was somewhat of a disappointment to Kathie. It was no surprise, of course, when Marilee tried to sabotage the date right from the outset by finding fault with everything. That was to be expected. But Clyde—well, Clyde wasn't exactly a world-beater when it came to grappling with nature in the raw.

The mere question of gathering a little wood, building a fire and toasting weenies on the beach shouldn't throw any normal, healthy male, Kathie fretted. But it certainly seemed to throw Clyde. He battled for a half hour to get a fire going in the sand, only to have it collapse or blow out every time. He wandered around aimlessly searching for sticks to roast the franks on, and returned with three puny pieces of driftwood which were no good at all. On each occasion Bruce had to step in and take over.

Marilee contributed her bit by getting a generous handful of sand into the mixed green salad. "My goodness!" she wailed, pitifully contrite. "Look what I did! I reckon I'm just too clumsy for words."

"Oh, I don't know about that," Bruce muttered. "I could think of some words with no trouble at all. Kathie, see if you can salvage anything from this mess."

"With pleasure," Kathie said, throwing Marilee an angry look. She grew even more angry when she read triumph in the other girl's face. The sand had been no accident, any more than Marilee's constant whining about everything was accidental either. Marilee had deliberately set out to gum up this shindig. And what was more, Kathie admitted gloomily, she was getting away with it.

"Golly, what a shambles this has turned out to be," Kathie fumed to Bruce when they finally gave up in disgust and swam far out by themselves.

"Well, I did my best," Bruce said. "It sounded like a fine idea to me. I knew Marilee would behave like a twerp, and I figured Clyde would see that." He chuckled. "Is it my fault if Clyde has been too busy stumbling over his own feet to notice what Marilee was pulling?"

"Well, I wouldn't be so conceited about it if I were you," Kathie said at once, leaping to Clyde's defense. "The fact that you happen to be good at a lot of different things doesn't mean that every guy is supposed to be."

"Thank you, ma'am," Bruce said. "I sho'ly do appreciate them kind words, ma'am."

"Oh, shut up," Kathie mumbled. And as she said it, a wave splashed a few gallons of salt water into her mouth, which didn't help at all.

CHAPTER IV

DESPONDENT HEART

WHEN Clyde drove them back into town, he dropped Kathie and Bruce at the Yacht Basin. Kathie watched the sleek convertible glide away and noticed that Marilee didn't even wait until they had turned out of sight before she began inching closer to Clyde's side of the car.

"Phooey!" Kathie said in disgust. "With so many really sweet Southern girls floating around loose, why on earth did he have to pick out the one who fell in the pickle vat?"

"Say, that's not bad," Bruce observed. "That's not bad at all. Pickle vat."

"Very funny," Kathie said miserably. "It's easy for you to laugh. How would you like it if you had fallen for the female member of that combine?"

"Marilee?" Bruce smiled. "You won't believe this, but there was a time way back when I thought I had done just that."

"No kidding?" Kathie said, wondering why she didn't go for that particular

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idea at all.

"Straight goods," Bruce said. "That was back in my salad days, when I was young and innocent."

"You shouldn't have been that innocent when you were three weeks old."

"Don't be too sure, sugarlump. Marilee knows just how to curl herself up into a very exciting armful. On a moonlight night she packs quite a wallop."

"Bruce Kendall, stop teasing me!" She was near tears with disappointment already, and Bruce wasn't making things any easier. "I know I'm being a dope, but I can't help it! Tell me what to do."

"You mean, how can you swing friend Clyde into line?"

"Well, yes, if you insist on being so blunt about it."

"I'm not being blunt. I'm just facing facts." He was silent for a moment. "Tell you what. The *Dolphin* is pretty well booked up for the week end, but I'll be clear Monday. When you knock off at the Nautilus Monday night, come on out. I'll have something figured out by then."

"Thanks," she said, managing to smile. "It's good to know I'm not in this rat race by myself."

"You're not," Bruce said comfortingly. "Kendall will stand behind you until the last shred of your heart is thoroughly pulverized, if that's what you want. And it seems to be."

Kathie spent a miserable week end. The restaurant was jammed with hundreds of people, none of whom turned out to be Clyde Holcombe. In the evenings after work she wandered down to the harbor in the faint hope that Bruce might be there, but the *Dolphin* was out every time she looked. The only thing left to do was spend long, lonely hours on the park benches, sighing at the memory of Clyde's handsome face and otherwise feeling sorry for herself.

On Monday night she hurried to the *Dolphin's* berth at the dock and her heart leaped thankfully. It was in. And Bruce was sprawled on the deck playing the harmonica in a horribly flat manner.

"Don't you ever hit the right notes?" she inquired as she came aboard. "Just for a change?"

"Hi, Red," Bruce said. "The right notes? Certainly not. Takes all the fun out of it. Listen to this."

He launched into a thoroughly off-key version of "My Old Kentucky Home." It was so awful Kathie couldn't help smiling, in spite of how terrible she felt, but Bruce kept going with happy abandon. Half way through, however, a forlorn looking dog pattered along the dock, took a long look at Bruce and began to howl.

Bruce grinned and put the harmonica in his pocket. "My public," he said. "Okay, son, you can stop now. I'll be quiet."

The dog howled once more and ambled away. "How is love's sweet song these days?" Bruce inquired.

"About as flat as that tune you were just murdering," Kathie said. "Darn it all, Bruce, I'm in love with the guy! I can't eat. I can't sleep. I'm going slowly off my noodle thinking of how that Marilee dame is wrapping him up. What'll I do, Bruce?"

"I promised you another plan of action," he said. "And I've thought of one."

The pipe appeared and he lit it thoughtfully. "Did I hear you mention once that you play golf?"

"Golf? Well, I play at it. Babe Didrickson isn't sitting up nights worrying about me, though."

"She doesn't have to," Bruce said. "All I want to know is that you can find your way around a course. And obviously you can."

"I still don't get the pitch," Kathie said.

Bruce dropped his voice. "Look, the reason the swimming party fizzled was because Marilee was along. If you want to make any sort of impression on Clyde, you've got to attack him when Marilee isn't around. Golf is the perfect answer. That's one sport she wouldn't even pretend to tackle."

Kathie began to smile. "Keep talking, Mr. Kendall. You seem to be making sense."

"I'm making even more sense than you know, sweetiepuss. Because golf is one of young Mr. Clyde Holcombe's favorite dishes. He takes lessons all the time and plays constantly. So we'll cook up a three-way game with him, you and

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me. He'll have a chance to strut his stuff, and you can exude feminine charm." He grinned. "Baseball isn't the only game where gals can pitch their curves."

"Bruce, you're a genius!" Kathie burst out gleefully. "A real, honest-to-goodness genius. That's a wonderful idea!"

"Good," Bruce said. "Now that you've bought it, I'll collect my payment for same."

"Payment?" she said blankly. "I don't understand."

"Don't worry about that," Bruce said putting down the pipe and rising. "I'll take care of the whole thing."

AGAIN he caught her off guard. Again she found herself imprisoned in his powerful arms before she knew what was happening. And again she felt his lips find hers in a kiss that left her shaking like a leaf!

She couldn't have escaped if she had wanted to. And she wasn't too sure she wanted to. Okay, she was in love with Clyde. She thought he was the most wonderful person she had ever met in her life. She adored the ground he walked on, and the water he sailed on, and everything else about him.

But confound it, being kissed by Bruce Kendall was still one heck of a thrilling experience!

She wondered if he would try to follow through this time. She found herself hoping that he would. Maybe he would be shaken, just as she was. It wasn't fair that he could bang her emotions around that way, even if only for the moment, and not show any scars of battle himself!

But she was once again doomed to disappointment. When Bruce finally did release her he picked up his pipe again and said simply: "I'm hungry, Red."

"You're hungry," she said faintly.

"Change that to thirsty. Go below to the galley and fix us a mess of coffee. Okay?"

"Okay," she wheezed and stumbled to obey him, her head still reeling.

They agreed that it would be best for Bruce to do the setting up of the golf game, rather than Kathie, so that it wouldn't seem too obvious. And when Bruce called the next day to report, he had good news. Everything was falling into place, he told her. Clyde had swallowed the idea whole and the date was all set for Thursday morning, with an early enough start so that Kathie would be back to work in time for the noon rush. Better yet, it was Clyde himself who suggested leaving Marilee out of the proceedings altogether.

"He said not even to bother calling her," Bruce finished. "Sounds to me as though he's looking for a chance to date you again, and doesn't want his little Dixie babe cluttering up the scenery."

"Wonderful," Kathie breathed. "Remind me to build a statue to you some day."

"Who cares about statues? Those kisses are much more satisfactory rewards."

"Say, wait a minute," Kathie protested. "Them there things are strong medicine. They've got to be taken in small doses, Kendall—with plenty of time in between!"

"Why, Kathie," he chided her mildly. "Anybody would think you enjoyed my kisses. You know that isn't true at all. You just kiss me and think of Clyde. I'm what you might call a blindfold substitute."

"You think that's it?" Kathie said doubtfully. "Maybe you're right. I wonder—"

But the line was dead. Bruce had hung up. She smiled to herself and replaced her own phone in its cradle.

"What a guy!" she murmured.

Nevertheless, it wasn't Bruce she was thinking of as she dressed for the golf game Thursday morning. It was Clyde and Clyde alone whom she wanted to impress. Out of her limited wardrobe she selected a yellow linen sport dress and yellow angora socks to match. It was a simple costume, but it served as a startlingly effective background for her soft, clear complexion and the lovely red hair which cascaded down like a burnished waterfall in the morning sunshine.

She was delighted to note the fast glance of approval Clyde gave her as he and Bruce picked her up. But Clyde's interest, as Bruce had forecast, was all in golf. "I really get a bang out of the

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game," he said as they pulled up at the Country Club parking lot. "I've played at least twice a week for three years now."

"You must be pretty good," Kathie said. "I hope I don't slow you down too much. I'm strictly a dub."

"Don't worry about that," Clyde said magnanimously. "We're all out for fun anyway. We won't mind waiting for you."

Kathie smothered a smile and a few minutes later she was on the first tee preparing to drive. She glanced down the long, flat fairway, swung back and got off a pretty good shot. It wasn't a world-beater, but it was straight and well hit.

"Not bad," Clyde said. "Shall I take over, Bruce?"

"It's all yours," Bruce said, but Clyde was teeing up even before Bruce answered him.

Clyde, it seemed, was a waggler. He addressed the ball, scowled at it fiercely, and began to waggle both the club and himself. If the club wasn't waggling, some portion of Clyde's anatomy was. After a while the suspense grew terrific.

It was something like the old gag of waiting for the man upstairs to drop the other shoe.

By the time Clyde finally decided to let fly, Kathie was all set to see the ball travel ten or twelve miles out into the Atlantic Ocean. Instead, it popped into the air under Clyde's vicious swing and thudded into the rough barely in front of the tee.

Kathie was about to laugh, but she smothered the laugh just in time. Clyde wasn't smiling, as Kathie would have been if she had made such a ridiculous shot. Instead, he seemed sore.

"Wonder what went wrong?" he frowned, moving aside. "Maybe my backswing was too fast. Or perhaps I played it too far off my right foot instead of my left."

He paused. Bruce teed up his ball, took one brief glance down the course and sent a screaming drive which split the middle of the fairway and came to rest within a few yards of the green.

"Whoof!" Kathie eclaimed. Clyde just stared. Then he hunched his shoulders and followed his caddy into the tall grass.

CHAPTER V

A Jolt to Romance

THOSE opening drives set the pattern for the entire round. Much to her amazement Kathie found that even with her dubbing game she was still doing better than Clyde. For all his contortions and fierce concentration, Clyde couldn't seem to find the range at all. During the course of the eighteen holes, he managed to do everything to his ball except feed it into a meat grinder. And before the round was over, the ball looked as though that too had been included in the morning's activity.

"I've never been so badly off my game!" Clyde raged as his drive on the last hole scurried gaily into a deep sand trap. "I can't understand it!"

Kathie began to be annoyed, not at Clyde's poor golf but at his taking it so seriously. "Well, it's only a game, after all," she said. "Golly, I just laugh it off when I flub shots."

Clyde smiled bleakly. "There's no reason to laugh anything off," he insisted. "I assure you, I play a much better game than this."

"We know that, Clyde! And what difference does it make anyhow? We just came out for a good time, that's all. It's not a matter of life and death."

Clyde mumbled something, but it was obvious that he disagreed with her. Kathie shrugged and stepped aside while the placid Bruce proceeded to pole another towering shot which hung in the blue sky as though it were suspended on an invisible thread. Kathie's eyes narrowed. She had been getting more suspicious by the minute, ever since this round began.

Now she could keep silent no longer. She waited until Clyde had plowed into his sand trap out of earshot, then she glared at Bruce.

"Was this golf game another one of your brilliant ideas?" she demanded.

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"Huh?" Bruce said. "Sure it was my idea. I don't get you."

"The heck you don't get me! I don't mean the idea for the game itself. I'm just wondering if you knew it would work out this way, with you being the one who shows off instead of poor Clyde."

"I'm just playing golf," Bruce said innocently.

"Sure. You're just playing golf. I happened to add your score just now, up through the seventeenth hole. Do you know how you're shooting, Kendall? Three over par for the entire course!"

"My, my," Bruce said. "I must be shooting over my head."

She stepped in front of him and placed her hands on her hips. "Bruce Kendall, are you a champion at this silly game, or not?"

"Well," Bruce drawled, "that depends. If you want to call the Florida State Championships important—well, maybe I am."

"Fore!" howled Clyde from the sand trap. A moment later a small geyser of sand rose into the air, hung suspended for an instant, then settled gently back. No golf ball was in the geyser of sand. Some colorful English followed it, however.

Kathie looked at Bruce and laughed. She laughed until she was weak, then she leaned against Bruce and buried her face in his shoulder.

"Careful!" Bruce was chuckling too. "We wouldn't want to offend Clyde."

"He's an awful nice kid, Bruce," she said, still weak with laughter. "But he takes himself so seriously!"

"Don't hold that against him," Bruce said. "Golf is that kind of game."

"You're right," Kathie said, recovering. She looked back toward the trap in time to see another wave of sand float up and out. Again no ball appeared, but an instant later the golf club itself sailed into view.

Kathie caught Bruce's eye and began to laugh all over again.

She was pretty discouraged about the whole deal, however. She had hoped desperately that this morning's play would end with everything strictly peaches between herself and Clyde. Instead, Clyde probably hated her for having witnessed his gruesome exhibition. The three of them trooped into the clubhouse afterwards and ordered drinks in the rathskeller.

But when Bruce had to leave the table to put in a phone call, Kathie got a delightful surprise. Now that the match was over, Clyde's good humor seemed to flow back miraculously.

"I guess I was pretty much of a twerp out there," he confessed. "You're right, Kathie, it is just a game. I ought to have my ears pinned back for being such a bum sport."

"I didn't think you were a poor sport, Clyde," she said, the spell of his charm beginning to sweep over her again.

"Sure you did. So did Bruce. And you were both right." He grinned, and it was like the turning on of a thousand electric lights. "I guess the main trouble was that I wanted to impress you."

"Impress *me*?" she gasped.

"Sure." His eyes bored into hers. "Don't tell me you're surprised, Kathie. You must know how much I've been thinking about you ever since we first met."

Kathie exhaled. She stared at him, unable to believe her ears. But the words Clyde was saying now were the most beautiful words she had ever heard.

"I've been mighty anxious to ask you for another date," he went on. "A lot more dates. As many as you'd give me. I've had to go a little slow because Marilee and I have been friends for a long time, and I didn't want to hurt her feelings. But I've seen enough of her now so that she shouldn't be offended." He shrugged. "From here on, you call the shots."

She stared at him. "Is this a backhanded way of asking me for a date?"

"There's nothing backhanded about it, darling. I'm asking you for a date, period. A lot of dates."

Darling! Clyde had called her darling!

"I think that might be arranged," she managed to say.

"Tonight?"

"Tonight," Kathie whispered.

And that was the start of it. Before Kathie could wake up to this gorgeous thing which was happening to her, she found herself getting the most thrilling

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rush imaginable from Clyde.

Evening after evening they went out together. Clyde took her to the best restaurants, to the most glamorous night clubs. Often on Kathie's nights off, they would drive into Miami and make the rounds of the glittering cabarets out at the beach. They went to the horse races together, and to the jai-alai games, and for breath-taking trips on the placid waters of Biscayne Bay.

"Having fun?" Clyde would ask her from time to time.

"Oh darling, you know I am!" Kathie would reply. They were both at the "darling" stage by now. The heavenly word was no longer an unusual one. It had become something very precious to both of them.

The most wonderful feature of all was that Marilee was dropping further and further into the background. And whenever Kathie made her periodic reports to Bruce on the progress of the romance, she couldn't help gloating just a little over this fact.

But Bruce was far from convinced that this lull on the Marilee front would continue.

"Keep you eyes open, Red," he cautioned her. "I've known that Marilee babe longer than you have. Don't get the idea that you've won this battle yet."

"But I'm winning it, Bruce," she said dreamily. "I'm positive now that Clyde loves me."

"What's so startling about that?" Bruce inquired.

She looked at him, puzzled. He wasn't smiling. And he wasn't looking at her.

"What?" she said.

"Skip it," Bruce snapped. "And beat it so I can earn a living. If you're winding in your reel with Clyde hanging on the end of the line, I'm happy. I'm glad I was able to contribute my half a cent's worth of advice. But from now on, be a good kid and keep the details to yourself, will you? They're beginning to make me a little ill, and I'm fresh out of bicarbonate."

She was amazed at his words, and even more amazed at his vehemence. She did a lot of thinking that night, wondering if she had done something to offend him. Golly, she wouldn't offend Bruce for anything in the world! He had been a grand friend to her, before Clyde floated into the picture and since. She hoped he would snap out of this mood, whatever had caused it.

But there wasn't much time for worrying about that with Clyde constantly on tap. And Kathie couldn't imagine how anything could possibly happen to destroy the beautiful dream which was so close to becoming a reality. Clyde's kisses were growing sweeter by the day. They were probably the sweetest kisses in the history of love, Kathie convinced herself.

Then, just when she was certain that she and Clyde were on the last leg of their journey to the altar—the top blew off!

The first inkling Kathie got was when Clyde phoned her hurriedly at the Nautilus to break his date with her for that afternoon. "My father's arriving today," he said in clipped tones. "And I can't tell how long I'll be tied up."

"That's perfectly all right," Kathie said at once. "I can understand that you'll want to spend the afternoon with him."

"Well," Clyde hesitated, then rushed on, "it'll be more than this afternoon sweet. Dad likes to have me around whenever he's in town. You and I will have dates, of course, but I'm afraid they won't be as frequent as they have been. We'll sort of have to wait for the times when Dad doesn't want me around."

"Of course," Kathie said dully. "Obviously your father wouldn't want me tagging along."

"Now don't go jumping to conclusions Kathie. I didn't say that."

"You didn't have to," she said miserably. "Anyway, don't worry about it. Drop around some time when Papa will let you, and I'll make up my mind whether I want to give you a date or not."

"But—Kathie!"

She hung up on him. Just in time. The tears that welled up in her throat would have choked off any further conversation anyhow.

She waited until the next day, hoping against hope that Clyde would phone her again. She knew he hadn't meant to sound as brutal as he had, but that didn't

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lessen the blow.

When another lunch hour passed still with no word from him, she swallowed her pride again and ambled moodily out to the *Dolphin's* berth. She was encouraged to find that Bruce was there, and that the toneless harmonica was back in action.

"Greetings," he said, as she climbed aboard and flopped on to the deck like a discouraged burlap sack. "Who ate your breakfast?"

"Nobody," Kathie said. "Including me."

"Ah," Bruce said. "Trouble with little Rollo. Yes?"

"You said not to bother you with such details any more."

"Shucks, forget about that," Bruce said cheerfully. "Didn't mean a thing. What's the latest thorn on the rose of your beautiful romance?"

SHE wished he wouldn't be sarcastic about her love for Clyde, but she needed his advice too badly to worry about that now. She told him the story, explained how Clyde had phoned her and practically told her he wouldn't be seeing her any more unless the elder Holcombe gave his okay. Bruce listened thoughtfully, and when Kathie finished he nodded.

"I'm not too surprised to hear that," he said. "Judd Holcombe is a good egg, as I told you, but he made his fortune by running other people's lives for them, and he's still practising that technique on Clyde."

"And Clyde lets him get away with it?" she demanded.

"Clyde's a realist, Red. You're not. Where do you think the money comes from that Clyde has been lavishing on you? Who do you think gave him his yacht, the *Shawnee*? Who do you think makes it possible for him to take four-month vacations so that he can spend his winters in Florida having himself a rare old time?" Bruce laughed. "If anybody ever makes me that kind of a proposition, I'll be slightly inclined to take a few orders myself."

"I don't believe it," Kathie snapped. "I can't see you taking orders from anybody."

"Why, thank you for the compliment, angelface. You may be right at that." He grew serious. "On the question of Judd Holcombe blowing into town, I'm not surprised at that either. In fact, I knew it was going to happen."

"You knew?"

"Yes. He usually comes down a month or so later in the season. But he got the sweetest little old letter recently, from the sweetest little old Southern gal, telling him that his little old son was falling in love with a little old redhead named Kathie Walker."

"Marilee!" Kathie exploded. "*She* wrote him!"

"Check," Bruce said. "She told me all about it."

KATHIE'S eyes dimmed. "Are you surrending?" Bruce asked.

"Do I have a choice?"

"Certainly. If the old boy's approval is necessary, go out and get it. Once you've got that, Clyde would jump at the chance to marry you."

Kathie's eyes widened.

"Bruce! You think I could get away with it?"

Bruce dropped his voice. "You've got your chance right now. You see that little round man down there on the dock? The bald-headed guy with the bay window? That's Judd Holcombe."

"Clyde's father?" Kathie said in surprise. "Why, he doesn't look like a bad guy."

"He isn't. Now look: Go over there and get into conversation with him about sailboats. *Not* motorboats. Sails. Understand? He's wild about sailing. Tell him you're a friend of mine. Then when you've got him hooked, mention sort of casual-like who you are. If that doesn't work, I'll swallow this mainsheet."

"Bruce, you're a wonder!"

"I know. A genius. Now—you can get going."

She paused briefly to stare at him. "I wish I could figure why you're so anxious to toss me right into Clyde's arms. It's not very flattering, to say the least."

Bruce laughed. "It's what you want, isn't it?"

"Oh, shut up," she grumbled, and headed down the dock.

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CHAPTER VI

RIGHT CHOICE

JUDD Holcombe was leaning on the rail of the pier puffing at a cigar. Kathie sidled up alongside, took a deep breath and launched her campaign.

"Well, at least there's one sailboat in the harbor," she said, "in the midst of all these motor jobs."

Judd Holcombe turned slowly, and a glow of happiness spread over his face. "Young lady," he said, "would you repeat that please?"

Kathie repeated it, and the result was instantaneous. "Don't tell me," he whispered, "that I've met a kindred soul? Another lost spirit who still loves the gentle roll of a windjammer, the thrill of seeing a sail spanking in a sharp breeze?"

"You too?" Kathie said innocently.

"I should say me too! What was that you were saying about some sailing ship here in Oceanside?"

"Sure. The *Dolphin*. It's right over there."

"The *Dolphin*!" Clyde's father roared. "Now I'm really glad I came down early! Is Bruce Kendall still skipper?"

"Sure," Kathie said, liking the elder Holcombe more by the minute. "He's on board now. I just left him."

"Come with me," Holcombe ordered, and grabbed Kathie's hand. He pounded along the dock with Kathie in breathless pursuit, and an instant later he and Bruce were greeting each other like long lost brothers.

"I can't wait to get out in this crate again," Holcombe said gleefully. "In fact, I'd like to charter it for tonight."

"That's swell by me," Bruce said.

"And you, young lady, will come along!" Holcombe added, turning to Kathie. "I won't take no for an answer. What is your name, by the way?"

"Kathie Walker." she said, and held her breath.

"Glad to—" Then the name penetrated. "*You* are Kathie Walker?"

"Sure," Kathie said, trying not to look at Bruce.

Holcombe mumbled something under his breath about "That fool Marilee woman!" Then he raised his voice: "All the more reason why you'll join us. I'm mighty glad to know you, Kathie. Maybe you haven't spotted me as yet, but I'm Clyde Holcombe's father."

"Oh, really?" Kathie said, wondering if her surprise looked genuine.

"Absolutely," Holcombe said. "Clyde's written me about you, of course." Once again he beamed. "And it looks like the crazy young pup has shown some good judgment for the first time in his life. Tell you what: I'll get Clyde and Marilee Pennington to join us tonight. Then we'll see who really stands up best when we've got the lee rail down and are taking green water over the bow."

Kathie's pulse was racing with anticipation, that night, when the *Dolphin* headed out into the calm Atlantic. Clyde and Marilee were on board, as well as Clyde's father, while Bruce was at the helm. The contrast in dress was startling. Clyde and Marilee were dressed as though they had just come in from a cocktail party. Kathie, on the other hand, wore a pair of faded blue denim slacks, a white blouse and sneakers, while Judd Holcombe was wearing a shredded sport shirt and an old pair of dungarees.

From the outset Marilee huddled into a corner, trying to protect her dress and hair-do against the spray. It made Kathie savagely happy to see how miserable the sharp-eyed Southern girl really was. "You brought this on yourself, sweetie-pie," she muttered under her breath.

Then she turned her attention to Clyde.

At first Clyde seemed embarrased over what had happened. But as the minutes sped past and the elder Holcombe grew more and more chummy with Kathie, Clyde too began to thaw.

"Wonderful girl here," Judd Holcombe would bellow. "Wonderful! Likes sailing as much as I do. Kind of gir for you, son. Hey, Kathie, grab tha jib sail and let go the backstay—we're coming about."

"Aye aye, sir," Kathie would cal

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back, then she'd take a fast glance at Bruce for an interpretation of what Judd Holcombe had said.

"Gee, Dad thinks you're wonderful," Clyde whispered once. And later: "Golly, Kathie you're surely making a hit with Pop."

"Fine," she said absently, wondering why she wasn't more enthused. Her spirits, she told herself, should be soaring at this point. Everything was working out just as she had hoped. And yet she felt strangely flat.

Then something else happened to confuse her even more. Bruce, in spite of his unflattering opinion of Marilee, began to get very clubby with her. While Judd Holcombe was having himself a high old time, with Kathie and Clyde trying to follow his lead, Marilee and Bruce proceeded to form a closed corporation of two in the rear of the boat.

Kathie began to fret, and then to fume. She didn't know why she should, exactly, except that—well, it just didn't make sense, that's all! "Marilee is Clyde's girl," she told herself. But no, that wasn't right. That was what she *didn't* want. "Marilee and Bruce are just old friends, that's all." But there was nothing old-friendish in the way they were gazing into each other's eyes.

"Darn!" Kathie growled to herself, wondering what in the world was wrong.

She felt no better at all when Clyde gleefully whispered, "Dad thinks you're the most wonderful girl he's ever met. Isn't that swell news?"

"Charming," Kathie said shortly, and didn't blame Clyde for looking bewildered. She was pretty bewildered herself.

The crowning touch came when they got back to the dock, and it came from Marilee. Marilee's glance met Kathie's and for the first time there was no malice there. In fact, Marilee even smiled at her!

"I'm so glad I could come along, honey," Marilee purred. "It's been a lovely evening. Really lovely."

And she was gone, before Kathie could reply. Confound it, what did that mean? The girl hadn't said two words to Clyde the whole trip, and yet she had had a lovely evening!

Was the whole town of Oceanside suddenly turning upside down?

The four of them said good-night to Bruce and piled into Clyde's car. They dropped Judd Holcombe at his hotel, after more shaking hands with Kathie and telling her what a wonderful sailor she was. Then Clyde suggested that they drop Marilee next, and Kathie was staggered when Marilee raised no objections at all.

As soon as he and Kathie were alone, Clyde sped down to the beach and parked. His arms went around her and his eyes were shining.

"Darling, it's worked out better than I ever could have hoped," he announced. "Dad really fell for you hard. In fact, he told me just before we docked that if I didn't grab you off in a hurry, I'd be even more of a dope than he gave me credit for being."

"Your father approves," Kathie muttered. "That's delightful."

"Delightful? It's perfect! Naturally, I wouldn't let Dad tell me whom to marry, but it certainly does simplify things that he likes you as much as he does." His voice grew husky. "We are going to get married, Kathie. You know that, don't you?"

She looked at him. He kissed her, long and hard. But her arms didn't wind around his neck, as they always had in the past. Instead, she rested there quietly, motionless.

He seemed puzzled. "Kathie, is anything wrong?"

"Only one thing," she said. "Only one slight detail. We're *not* going to get married."

"Kathie!"

"I'm sorry, Clyde, but we're not, and that's final!" Tears fought their way into her eyes. She couldn't fathom why she was saying these things, and yet she knew that she had to. For weeks now she had lain awake nights hoping against hope that some day Clyde would propose to her. And now that he was doing it—she was turning him down!

"Please take me back to town," she begged. Then suddenly she said: "No! not to town. Take me back to the *Dolphin*."

"Oh," Clyde said bitterly. "Now I get it. It's Bruce."

Bruce. Bruce, her pal. The guy who

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had done his best to help her in this campaign. Bruce, who had told her just what to do, so that Clyde Holcombe would ask her to marry him!

Bruce!

"Great jumping sardines!" Kathie burst out. "You're right!"

She didn't even hear Clyde's last-ditch pleas as he drove her back to the harbor. She scarcely took the time to toss a hasty good-night over her shoulder as she bounded out of the car and raced along the pier. Maybe he wouldn't be there. Maybe he had come ashore.

Then her heart leaped thankfully. On the calm Southern night strains of music floated. Music of a very questionable variety. Music from a beat-up harmonica, being played by a beat-up guy she adored.

She leaped onto the *Dolphin* and her words were pouring out even before Bruce could say anything. "What's the big idea of trying to get rid of me?" she stormed. "What do you mean having the gall to shove me down Clyde Holcombe's throat? Don't you suppose I should have something to say about the man I want to marry?"

Bruce regarded her thoughtfully. "What does all that mean?"

"All right, you heel, if you want to hear me say it, I'll say it. I love you. I'm crazy about you. Gee whiz, I *must* be crazy! I—"

She didn't finish it, for Bruce came to life. And when Bruce came to life, so did Kathie's heartstrings. They began to play a gorgeous melody, a symphony of all the deliriously happy dreams she had been having recently—dreams she had thought were built around Clyde. Dreams she now knew were built around Bruce and Bruce alone.

Their lips clung for minutes, or hours. Their arms were tight around each other, and the stars overhead reeled in happy abandon. But the time came when Kathie's mind chugged slowly back into motion. When it did, she realized that none of this made any sense, no matter how delightful it all was.

"Okay, Kendall, that's enough," she said, stepping back. "Now you know. But I've still got to get a few answers."

"If you're asking whether I love you or not, save your breath. I have ever since you first showed up here."

"But if that's true," Kathie gasped, "why on earth did you work so hard to help me win Clyde?"

Bruce's eyes were sparkling. "Don't you get the picture yet, angel? You thought you had fallen for Clyde. You thought you wanted him. And if you hadn't won him, the way you did, you might never have been happy with me or anybody else. On the other hand, I was pretty sure that once you found you *could* have him, you'd see what a milksop he was and realize that you didn't really want him after all. See?"

Kathie saw. She decided that a few more kisses were in order, and in the middle of them Bruce asked her to marry him and she accepted and Bruce kissed her some more.

Kathie opened her eyes at last and gazed over Bruce's shoulder. The night was clear. The moonlight had magic in it. And she was in Bruce's arms, with a lifetime of glorious happiness stretching ahead of her.

Florida, she decided gleefully, was a wonderful place indeed!

Betrayed in love and business, stout-hearted Merri Milford hops aboard the merry-go-round of romance once again to make another try for success and happiness in MY HEART'S ON THE HIGH ROAD, a glamorous complete novel by Ruth Ives featured in February

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Love's NO QUARTET

By SHIRLEY MANNERS

Sherry Seaton must make her choice among four young swains!

IN Sherry Seaton's estimation romance was all right in its way, but when there were four young men madly in love with you it made life quite complicated. Particularly as each had proposed to her and refused to take no for an answer.

The first of the quartet to ask Sherry to marry him had been Warren Bishop. He was a teller in the Clearview National Bank—blond, and so good looking that he took his profile a bit too seriously. In its way his proposal had been something to remember.

"I know this is the moment you have been waiting for, just as I have, Sherry," he said as they sat on her front porch. "Often I have visualized your rapture as you melt into my arms."

"Huh?" Sherry was blonde and lovely, and at the moment also puzzled. Not by Warren's flowery language—she had heard him burst forth with that before, and decided he had read a book. The wrong one. "Just why all the agitation, Warren?"

"This is our great moment," Warren said. "Will you marry me, Sherry?"

"No!" Sherry said firmly. "Thank you most to death."

"You mean you haven't learned to love me yet?" Warren asked in surprise.

"Exactly," Sherry said. "Haven't even studied the first lesson, since I have no intention of taking the course."

"I understand," Warren said. "You think you love another. But eventually you will come crawling into the shelter of my steadfast heart. I will be waiting."

With that Warren Bishop had marched off the porch leaving Sherry there in the swing, her face buried in a pillow and her slender shoulders convulsively shaking with laughter.

Her next proposal had been from Ted Potter. He was dark and husky, did a lot of amateur boxing and tried to act like the hard-boiled heroes he saw in the movies.

"How about you and me getting hitched, Sherry?" he asked as he brought her home from a date one night. "We'd make a swell team in double harness."

"Sweet of you to ask me, Ted," Sherry said. "But I don't happen to be in love with you."

"That's what you think," Ted said. "But I'm betting you change your mind about that. I'll stick around until you do."

TED had stuck around, and so had Warren. Then George Harvey, who was a teacher in the local high school, voiced his sentiments. George was young and blond, but strangely shy and a bit old-fashioned.

"Miss Seaton," he said one evening as he was bringing Sherry home from a movie in his car. "I have always been a firm believer that man should not live alone."

"Since you live with your mother,

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father and four sisters, I'd hardly say you live alone, George. And how long do we have to know each other before you stop calling me Miss Seaton?"

"Very well, Sherry," George said. "Will you do me the great honor of becoming my wife?"

"I'm flattered, George, it is sweet of you to ask me," Sherry said. "But I'm afraid I must refuse."

"Perhaps I have been too hasty," George said. "Suppose I give you more time to think the matter over. Yes, that would be best."

It was Jim Cartwright's proposal that left Sherry still baffled. Jim was a red-headed, successful young attorney, who apparently found everything and everyone including Sherry amusing. He seldom bothered to make a date with her, but would drop around at her house whenever he was in the mood. It didn't seem to make the slightest bit of difference to him if he found one or all three of Sherry's other swains there.

"Just as a matter of record," Jim said one night when Warren, Ted and George were also with Sherry in the living room of her home, "consider that I have proposed to you, Sherry."

"When?" asked Sherry in surprise.

"Why right now." Jim grinned, and the three other men glared at him. "Will you marry me, light of my life?"

"Of course not," said Sherry firmly, but she was surprised by the shivery feeling she felt as she gazed at Jim. "Just as a matter of record."

"We can't go on like this," Warren Bishop said. "Even though I have no doubt I will eventually win the affections of the fair lady, the continued baleful glances of my rivals makes me uneasy."

"Sez you," snapped Ted Potter.

An idea struck Sherry. She went to a desk and quickly started writing on a piece of paper. When she had finished she stood up.

"Listen, all of you," she said as the four men gathered around her. "You all have proposed to me, and so I gather you love me enough to do anything I ask. Am I right?"

"Naturally," George Harvey said. "What have you in mind, Sherry?"

"A test of your great love," Sherry said glancing at the paper in her hand "George, tomorrow morning I want you to go to the Frilly-Lacey Shoppe and buy me a nightgown, size twelve."

"The Frilly-Lacey Shoppe," said George in horror. "But only ladies go there. What will my students think?" He moved toward the door. "I guess you are right, Sherry. Marriage is not for us." With that he left hastily.

"As for you, Warren," Sherry again glanced at the paper in her hand. "I want you to start growing a beard."

"A beard!" exclaimed Warren, turning pale. "But I'm not the type. I mean—my profile." He scowled. "The suggestion is horrible! You have opened my eyes! It would never do for me to consider marrying a girl who makes a sordid game of love."

"You better go, Warren, before I shut your eyes and mess up that pretty profile," Jim Cartwright said quietly.

Warren Bishop departed hastily. Ted Potter grinned at Sherry.

"Go on, kid," he said. "What's the gimmick as far as I am concerned?"

"I'd like you to make a speech on wild flowers for the members of my afternoon bridge club next week," Sherry said. "I'm sure you will enjoy being the only man there with all the girls."

"You win," said Ted. "I could probably study up on wild flowers and I'm not shy about being with a bunch of girls, but you thinking up one like that for me is enough to convince me. You don't love me, and never will." He patted her on the cheek as he headed out of the room. "Luck to you, kid."

A FEW moments later Sherry found herself alone with Jim Cartwright. The amused expression was no longer on his face as he gazed at her. The look in his eyes made her feel a little breathless and she found her heart was beating faster.

"Shall I tell you what you wanted me to do?" he asked before she could speak.

"You know?" Sherry asked in surprise.

"Perhaps better than you do."

He moved closer to her and held out his arms. It seemed so natural, and

(Concluded on page 98)

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THE FRIENDLY SET invites you to receive interesting letters—and find new friends who are sincere and worthwhile.

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Give me a nickname under which you want your letter to be published. It will be only under this name that other readers will know you. They will write to you in my care—and I will forward their letters.

No letter will be forwarded unless a stamped envelope is enclosed. *Women and girls may write only to women and girls, and men only to men.* After the first letters, direct correspondence between you and your new friends will have been established.

IMPORTANT: In writing to me, or in requesting me to forward your letters, do not neglect to give the following particulars: Your name, address, age, sex. Supply at least one reference.

In asking that letters be forwarded, clearly print the number assigned to your chosen friend on the stamped envelope which you enclose. All letters should be written neatly in ink. Do not seal the letter that you wish forwarded. If any unwelcome letters should be received by readers, I would appreciate your forwarding them to this department.

Elizabeth Elder

YOUNG MARRIED WOMAN

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young married woman of 20 years of age. My hobbies are sewing and knitting. I love to receive letters and write to pals. I would like to hear from women from all over the world.

DOROTHY No. 8206

LONELY TEEN-AGER

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young girl in her teens, who is very lonely. I would like lots and lots of pen-pals. I enjoy all sports. So please you girls, everywhere, drop me a few lines. I promise to answer all letters, and to make them as interesting as possible.

ALICE No. 8207

CARROT-TOP

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a 14 year old redheaded girl. My hobbies are reading and writing letters. My favorite sports are swimming and baseball. I would like to hear from anyone of any age. How about it, girls!

MARY No. 8208

BLIND VETERAN

Dear Mrs. Elder: I would very much like to find a friend, for I am very lonely, and in need of one. I am a blind veteran. I was blinded while serving with the first Marine Division in the Pacific. I write my own letters, as I have a typewriter. I promise to answer any and all letters.

JOHNNY No. 8209

ENJOYS ALL SPORTS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 17 years of age, who enjoys all sports. I especially love swimming, music and dancing. I would like very much to hear from girls of my own age from all over the world. I promise to make all my letters as interesting as possible.

ANNA MAY No. 8210

MOVIE FAN

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a sixteen-year-old girl who would like to receive letters from a pen pal. I like all sports, but my favorite is baseball. I like to dance, go horseback riding and see all the latest movies.

ELSIE No. 8211

LONELY WOMAN

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a 25-year-old married woman. I would like very much to hear from married women around my age as I am very lonely. I live on the outskirts of town, and my nearest neighbor is quite a bit away. I think it would be very nice to correspond with someone. I promise to answer all letters that I receive.

DORIS No. 8212

ENJOYS WRITING LETTERS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 16, and go to high school. I would like very much to hear from girls from all over the world. I enjoy writing letters and receiving them. I also enjoy skating, swimming, and almost all sports. Come on girls, how's about writing me?

GEORGIA LEE No. 8213

COLLECTS AUTOGRAPHS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 15 years of age, and lonely. I like almost all outdoor sports. My hobby is collecting photographs and autographs. I promise to answer all letters I receive, so come on girls, please write.

STANCY No. 8214

WHEREVER YOU ARE!

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am in my teens, and I would appreciate hearing from as many girls as possible. I would like very much to have pen pals from all over the country of my age write me. My interests are many and varied. I promise to answer all letters which I receive. Please write me, wherever you are!

WANDA No. 8215

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EX-G.I. NAVY NURSE

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a 27 year old ex-G.I. Navy Nurse. I am married and have two children. I would like to correspond with young women who have served anywhere in the Pacific, preferably someone familiar with Manila, the Philippine Islands, and Hollandiar, New Guinea,

ALICE No. 8216

CROCHETS AND EMBROIDERS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young girl of 14 years of age, whose hobbies are crocheting, embroidering, roller skating, cooking, and letter writing. I would like very much to write to girls my age. I promise to exchange letters and photos to all who write. How about it girls, will you write?

BARBARA JEAN No. 8217

WILL EXCHANGE PICTURES

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a seventeen year old girl. My hobbies are reading books, music, skating, swimming, and receiving letters. I would like to hear from people from all over the world. I will answer all letters and exchange pictures.

HELEN No. 8218

WISHES TO MAKE FRIENDS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young girl of 15, and would love to make new friends. I enjoy crocheting, bicycle riding, writing letters, and going to the movies. I promise to answer all letters.

ETTA No. 8219

ENJOYS THE PIANO

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young girl of 16 years of age, who likes to play the piano and collect popular music. I like all out-door sports and am very fond of dancing. So come on girls, what are we waiting for, let's write.

PAM No. 8220

SOUTH AFRICAN GIRL

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young South African girl of 13 years of age, who would like to have a twin pen-friend. My birthday is the 12th of September. My hobbies are collecting stamps and bus tickets.

NITA No. 8221

WILL EXCHANGE SNAPS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young girl of 16, and am a junior in school. My hobbies are photography and sports. I will exchange snapshots and do my best in answering. I would like very much to write to girls whose birthday comes on March 5th.

MARIANNE No. 8222

IS INTERESTED IN EVERYTHING

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young married woman of 22 years of age, and have a boy 8 months old. My husband is a western music entertainer, and is away quite a bit so I have plenty of time to write letters. My hobby is collecting records, but I'm interested in everything. I promise to answer all letters.

GINNY No. 8223

IRISH LASS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young Irish girl, who would appreciate very much hearing from girls from all over the world. My hobbies are collecting stamps and flower hunting. I am fond of cycling, swimming, tennis, hiking and skating.

ISABELLE No. 8224

ENJOYS MAKING FRIENDS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young 22 year old mother. I would like to correspond with other young mothers. I enjoy making friends. My hobbies are sewing, baking, roller skating, dancing, playing the piano, and writing letters. I would like to swap favorite recipes. Also swap snapshots.

AUDREY No. 8225

WANTS TEXAS PEN-PALS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 13 years of My hobbies are dancing and reading stories of I would like to hear from any girls up to the a 16, especially girls from Texas. I will exchange shots.

LYNDA No. 8

LIKES HORSEBACK RIDING

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 14. My h are horseback riding, dancing, swimming and w to others my own age all over the world. I pr to answer any and all letters promptly. So cor girls, please write.

SYLVIA No.

LOVES TO SING

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young girl of 15 would like to have pen-pals whose birthday the 15th of May. My favorite pastimes are re sewing, painting, and sports. I love to sing. about it, girls?

MARY No.

YOUNG STAMP COLLECTOR

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a lonely girl of 11, would like girls around my age to write to me all over the world. My hobbies are collecting st singing, and sports. I love writing and rec letters.

DOREEN No.

A PLEA FROM ENGLAND

Dear Mrs. Elder: I know I'm in England, but I like to have a lot of pen pals. I am a 22 ye mother of a 2 year old boy. I love reading and t ing. I also love to write and receive letters, and make a faithful friend.

JEANNE No.

LIKES TO SEW

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am the wife of an ex- have three children, 2 boys and a girl. I am 27 old and enjoy reading, the radio, cooking, and b I especially enjoy sewing clothes for childr would like to hear from pen pals from all ov world. I hope to find plenty of letters in my m soon.

MURIEL No.

FROM CANADA

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a 15-year old girl wh lived all my life in Canada. I like to go movies, listen to the radio, and collect stamps. to receive and answer letters, and I hope to hea everyone from all over the world.

LUCIE No.

ENJOYS READING

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 14 years of ag would like to write and receive letters from one from anywhere. I also like popular mus reading. I would enjoy very much hearing fro of pen pals, and promise to make all my interesting.

LOIS No.

JUST A LONESOME BACHELOR

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am just a lonesome bachel likes the theater, dancing, reading, and meetin ple. I promise to answer any letter I receive pr So come on fellows, also you ex-G.I.'s and G.I. a few lines to a lonesome fellow, and make me

JOSEPH No.

COLLECTS MINIATURE FIGURES

Dear Mrs Elder: I am a 24 year old girl, who like very much to have some pen pals. My h are photography, collecting miniature figure pictures of other countries. Would like to hea girls anywhere.

MARY No.

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POSTCARD COLLECTOR

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a eighteen year old girl. I love collecting stamps, postcards, and enjoy reading and going to the movies. I love writing to pen pals and would like to hear from girls of any age and also those who are also interested in collecting stamps and postcards. I will answer every letter.

LOREEN No. 8236

WILL ANSWER PROMPTLY

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 12 years of age. My hobbies are reading, and writing letters. I enjoy playing basket ball and baseball. I will answer all letters promptly. I would like to hear especially from girls about my own age. So how's about it teenagers!

FRANCES No. 8237

FUTURE NURSE

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a girl of 15 years of age, and lonesome for pen pals. I am a high school student and want to become a nurse when school is finished. I love to write letters and exchange photographs. Please, won't someone write to me?

DESSIE No. 8238

CANADIAN TEEN-AGER

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a fifteen year old Canadian girl who loves to write letters and make new friends. I am very interested in swimming and baseball. I like practically every other outdoor sport. So come on, write me one and all.

JEAN No. 8239

YOUNG MOTHER

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a young mother of 22 years of age. I enjoy embroidering, reading, writing, hiking, skating, and going to the movies. I have a little girl of 18 months of age. I would like to exchange pictures and picture postcards with those who write.

CHRIS No. 8240

INTERESTED IN DESIGNING

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a fifteen year old Canadian girl who loves to write letters and make new friends. I am interested very much in art and dress designing. I like almost all sports, but especially enjoy swimming, baseball, and skating.

BARBARA No. 8241

FRENCH LASS

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a 15 year old French girl who would like a Scottish lassie to correspond with me. My hobbies are skating, music, dancing, and reading. I promise to answer all letters as promptly as possible, and will exchange photos with those who wish.

FRANCES No. 8242

COME ON AND WRITE

Dear Mrs. Elder: I am a lonely young girl of 13 years of age. I would like, very much, to receive letters from girls of my age. I like every sport. I enjoy writing and receiving letters. So how's about it, girls, come on and write!

ALICE No. 8243

(More Letters Next Issue)

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Miss Fay, Hanford, California: To cover up scrawny neck, choose dresses that have hi necklines and which fit the base of the nec Necklines that are sharply draped high acro the front are good, too. A clever pin or clip the neckline will add a dramatic note.

Betty Jane, Quincy, Illinois: Eyeshadow a mascara applied only to the outer half of t lids and lashes will give the eyes a wide-set loo

Judy M., Woburn, Massachusetts: When y choose your makeup base, remember that looks darker in its case than on the skin. Selec shade slightly darker than your natural sk tone. Apply the makeup base lightly, and ble it careful up to the hairline and under the ch

Mrs. A. L., Williston Park, New York: To avo getting more powder on your puff than need for one application, place a perforated pap doily over the powder in the box. Trim t doily to cover the face powder and you'll fi that sufficient powder will seep through t tiny holes in the doily. No mess on your dres ing table.

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LISTEN, GIRLS!

(Concluded from page 53)

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WHAT YOUR STARS REVEAL

(Continued from page 8)

What your horoscope reveals: Your strong compulsion to go on the stage is due to the powerful vibrations generated in your horoscope by the Sun, Mercury, and Neptune in the Sign Leo which rules the theatre. This urge is not supported by favorable aspects in your horoscope. On the contrary, you have Moon in your solar Twelfth House which rules seclusion. This influence can reduce the opportunity for rising to the top in an acting profession.

You need not give up in despair, however. The fact is that the Sign Leo also rules education. This Sign is being transited at present by the Planet Pluto, symbol of transformation. Consequently you can combine your talent with your training as an instructor of dramatic art and elocution. Most schools have a position available for teacher who can train youngsters to perform in the usual school plays, and who can help youngsters to overcome faulty diction.

The influences for a coaching position are excellent right now, due to the stimulating influences created by transiting Neptune in your solar Third House which rules mental and manual aptitudes.

A Deferred Visit

MRS. DOLORES F. F. writes: For the past five years I have been trying to visit my parents, but something always intervenes. My husband and I live about two thousand miles from home. Do you think the influences will improve so that I can see my folks soon? I was born July 4, 1902. My husband was born March 15, 1901.

What your horoscopes reveal: You may be able to visit your parents in the Spring or Fall of 1950 when Jupiter, symbol of good fortune, conjoins your natal Moon in the Sign Aquarius. The Moon is the symbol of motherhood. When it is activated by the harmonious vibrations of Jupiter, there can be an excellent opportunity to make the journey.

At the same time Uranus, symbol of sudden action, is moving forward toward its stimulating conjunction with your natal Sun in the Sign Cancer; and in trine formation with the Sun and Mercury in the Sign Pisces in your husband's birth chart. Inasmuch

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Mercury rules travel, your decision to take the trip is likely to be made unexpectedly as the result of unforeseen circumstances.

The Gambling Urge

ANTHONY S. J. writes: I have an uncontrollable impulse to gamble. Losing large sums of money does not discourage me. My wife has threatened to leave unless I cease betting, but I cannot help myself. Will I ever stop? My birthday was December 13, 1916.

What your horoscope reveals: At your birth the Sun occupied the Sign Sagittarius which rules horse racing. The Moon transited the Sign Leo which rules games of chance. Jupiter, symbol of wealth, occupied the Sign Aries in your solar Fifth House which rules speculation. These three parts of your horoscope are in trine aspect, denoting the inclination and capacity to do as you please.

The one factor that can moderate your gambling instincts is the trine aspect between Venus and Saturn. Venus is the sym-

[*Turn page*]

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bol of love. It occupies the Sign Scorpi which rules security. Saturn is the symbol c safety. It occupies the Sign Cancer whic rules women. This planetary relationshi indicates your deep devotion to your wif You know that your lifemate means wha she says, and you also realize that you woul feel bereft if she were to leave you.

You need not sacrifice your wife to you ruinous habit. You can make the choic right now while transiting Saturn is in trin aspect with your natal Mercury and Mars i the Sign Capricorn which has jurisdictio over sagacity and prudence. Mercury is th symbol of intelligence; Mars is the symbc of courage. You have the will power to mak up your mind, and the tenacity to stick t your decision.

When you have reached the conclusion tha you believe is for the best, you will carry out regardless of the consequences. Ha you mentioned your wife's birth date, would have been possible to determin whether your decision would be in compli ance with her desire, or contrary to her wis Without knowing her birthday, it is impos sible to arrive at a correct astrological in terpretation of the mutual aspects in you respective birth charts.

Going Steady

LARRY V. DeR. writes: I was born Octo ber 20, 1917. I have been going steady wit a girl whose birth occured in March 23, 192 For me it was love at first sight, and I hav been asking her to marry me since the firs month I met her, but she hesitates. Ho much longer must I wait before she finall gives her consent?

What your horoscopes reveal: Your gi friend also is capable of spontaneous emo tions because at her birth Venus and Mercu ry were conjoined in the Sign Pisces whic rules sensitive impressions. She has a war and vibrant personality because her nat

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un occupies the Fire Sign Aries which rules npetuous actions. Right now, however, this art of her horoscope is in square aspect with Uranus in her solar Fourth House which ules home and family matters. This con-guration signifies parental interference or ther domestic obstacles which are hard to vercome.

The impediment to the marriage may con-inue for several years, with the exception f a few harmonious intervals when she night decide on the spur of the moment to ccept your proposal.

In the meantime the Planet Neptune, sym-ol of illusion, is moving up toward its con-unction with your natal Sun in the Sign ibra. Therefore, you might begin to feel ather vague about the courtship, and your narriage prospects in general. This see-saw ondition can make both of you rather tense, vith frustration and anxiety adding their uota to the disturbed romantic moods. When he finally makes up her mind, you might

[*Turn page*]

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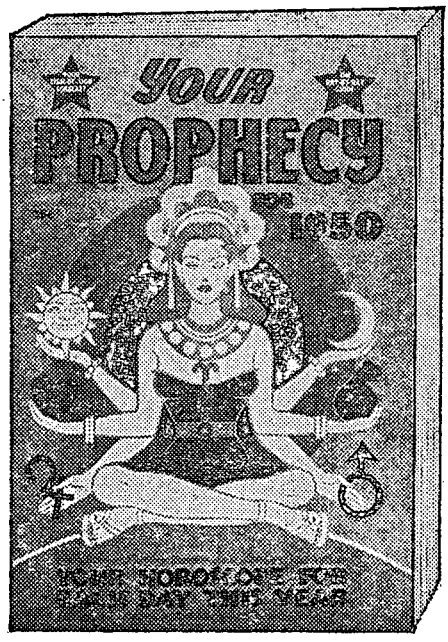

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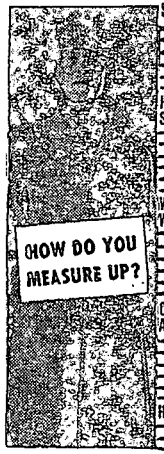

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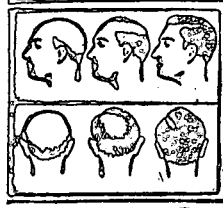

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not be as enthusiastic to set the wedding as you are at present.

Difficult Daughter

MRS. AMY V. C. writes: My daughter become unmanageable. She is conscious her good looks, and expects special atten from everyone. She will not take ad Can Astrology reveal a way to handle My birth date was July 12, 1910. She born August 5, 1934.

What your horoscopes reveal: Basic mony exists between your daughter and because three Planets in her horoscope join your natal Sun in the Sign Ca which rules motherhood. In your horos the Planet Venus, symbol of love, con her Moon in the Sign Gemini. This i change of aspects indicated beneficial i ences for mutual affection and similari ideals.

However, your daughter was born the Sun occupied the Sign Leo which dramatic expression. In other words likes to show off. When she can play a before an interested audience, she is i glory. Her natural desire for attentic emphasized right now by the oppositic transiting Jupiter to her natal Sun.

Morever, both of you might be rather trary while the Planet Uranus moves thr the Sign Cancer during the next six During that interval your daughter will

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ttained her maturity, making things easier or both of you.

A Difference in Ages

HILDA V. T. writes: Should I marry a man lmost twice my age? He says that he loves ne, and that he will do everything he can o make me happy. My friends and parents bject. They believe that I would be hap- ier with someone nearer my age. What are he indications for me? I was born October , 1925. He was born June 18, 1907.

What your horoscopes reveal: At your irth the Sun was in the Sign Libra; the Moon was in the Sign Aries; and Pluto was n the Sign Cancer. These three angles of our horoscopes constitute a Cardinal Sign ross, denoting dynamic qualities that can et you at odds with others.

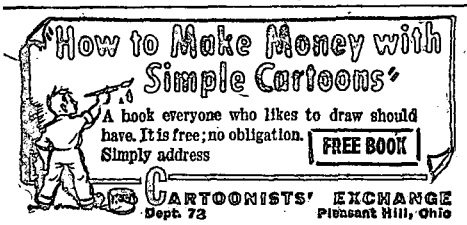
Your suitor has a similar Cardinal Sign ross, activated by Neptune and Jupiter in he Sign of Cancer. Mars and Uranus were in he Sign Capricorn, and the Moon was in the ign Libra. This similarity of aspects in ur respective horoscopes indicates that arriage might lead to an incessant struggle or supremacy between you. You are likely o insist that you are right, and he may want ou to concede that he is right.

Right now the Planet Uranus, symbol of ndependence, occupies the first decan of the ign Cancer. In this position Uranus acti- ates the stress that was established in your oroscope and in his by the original Cardinal ign cross. These vibratory radiations stir p influences for rebellious impatience in ach of you.

Nevertheless there is a great deal of mu- ual attraction and congeniality inasmuch s your Sun in the Sign Libra is in trine spect with his Sun in the Sign Gemini. You ke each other, and you can always remain riends.

Wait a while, until you have had a chance o test your feelings longer. You need more me than he does to make up your mind be- ause you have Venus in the Fixed Sign

[*Turn page*]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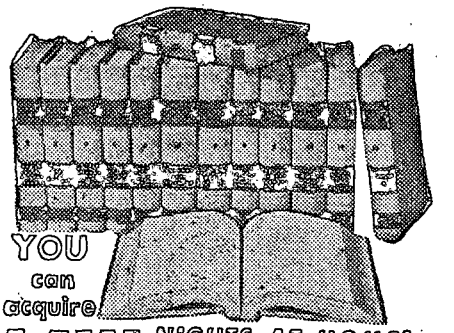

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Scorpio, making you capable of deep a abiding love. He has Venus in the Si Gemini which rules travel. This makes affections more migratory.

During the winter of 1950, while the Pla Jupiter transits your solar Fifth Hou which rules romance, you might find son one with whom you are more compatible.

The Family Auto

HARRY W. Z. writes: My father will l let me have his car to take my girl friends dates. It embarrasses me to ask them walk or ride busses. All the boys I kn can use the family automobiles. Why wo my Dad let me drive? Will he change mind soon? I am a good driver. I was b June 2, 1933.

What your horoscope reveals: A comp mise between you and your father is in cated soon, due to the transit of Jupi through your solar Ninth House which ru travel. Since you have Sun in the S Gemini, which rules transportation, it is s evident that you are a good driver.

Right now it would be inadvisable to ar with your father while Saturn is in squ aspect with your Sun Sign. Within a y or so, after this Planet changes its zodia position, your father might surprise you presenting you with an automobile.

LOVE'S NO QUARTET

(Concluded from page 86)

so right that she should step nearer a feel those arms tightened about her t derly. That she should lift her lips his kiss. There was no longer the slig est doubt that she was in love.

"Let me se that paper," Jim said he finally released her.

He took the paper and glanced at She had written out the things she l asked the other men to do but after name was just a question mark.

"I thought I might get some id about you later, darling," she said. "I you got them first."

Jim smiled. "Maybe I had bet really propose to you, just for the r ord."

"Uh-huh," Sherry said. "And I'd l ter accept you—just for the record."

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From then on your income is up to your own ability and determination. Every day is Big Earnings day for happy, established Mason Shoe Salesmen who are fortunate to work with the LEADING line in the field.

Here's What You Get

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You get the benefit of big, powerful ads in magazines like the Saturday Evening Post, Good Housekeeping, etc. People know Mason, are eager to get the Special Personal Fitting Service we advertise for your benefit. Remember, we pay for all this advertising to make you known as a Mason Certified Shoe Fitter — it doesn't cost you a cent.

• *Helpful Sales Training*

Whether you have experience or not, our potent program of continuing selling help and training is devoted to putting more money in your pocket — Complete Sales Outfit; Sales Getting Ideas prepared for you by 5,000 Successful Salesmen; Door Opener Gifts for Prospects; Special Selling Events and Prizes each month; advice from the most successful men in the organization. All are YOURS when you tie up with the Leader.

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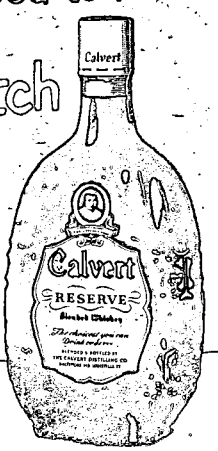

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